

Post-war economic opportunities in northern Uganda

Implications for women's empowerment and political participation

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Acronyms

ACTED	Agency for Cooperation and Technical Development
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
Alert	International Alert
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Counselling services support programme
EASSI	East African Sub-regional Support Initiative For the Advancement of Women
ERP	Land, Environment and Natural Resource Management programme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GOU	Government of Uganda
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IRP	Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Urban Improvement Programme
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MFI s	Micro Finance Institutions
MFPE D	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MP	Member of Parliament
MRSP	Mediation and Reconciliation Support Programme
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OCHA	Office of the Commissioner on Humanitarian Aid
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PMEP	Production and Marketing Enhancement Programme
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan
RA	Research Assistant
SACCO s	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations
UCSCU	Uganda Cooperatives, Savings and Credit Union
UEB	Uganda Electricity Board
UIA	Uganda Investment Authority
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAW	Violence Against Women
VEDCO	Voluntary Efforts for Development Concerns
WFP	World Food Programme
WTF	Women's Task Force

Executive Summary

Background

Northern Uganda is emerging from a brutal conflict which has spanned over two decades since the mid-1980s. The anti-government rebellion intensified by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) faction, led by Joseph Kony, has had an enormous economic impact, destroying infrastructure, markets, investment and livelihoods; drastically altering the demographic and skills base of the region; compounding countrywide divisions, especially between the north and south of Uganda.

While the Juba Peace Talks failed to reach a signed peace agreement between the LRA and the government of Uganda, a period of relative peace and security has since been enjoyed in northern Uganda, and has led to a renewed sense of hope regarding the rebuilding of the region's economy. This optimism has seen the government, development partners and investors either planning to make the most of possible opportunities in the north's post-conflict economy or contributing to peace through development endeavours. This study is concerned with gender dynamics in the post-war economy, focusing on women's positioning in the peace economy.

This is a women-focused study which looks at peace dividends and their nature, as well as the direction they are taking. The overall objective is to map out economic opportunities for women in post-war northern Uganda and the implications for their broader political participation and empowerment.

Specific objectives

- i) to determine the current status of women's economic participation in the post-war economy of northern Uganda;
- ii) to examine the ways in which women are taking advantage of opportunities in the post-war economy in northern Uganda;
- iii) to analyse the linkage between women's post-war economic participation, and their political participation and empowerment at household, community and state levels.

Women's participation in the post-war economy is analysed in terms of how they are taking advantage of unveiling opportunities, the structure of the post-war economy, as well as the implications on women's political participation and empowerment at the household, community and especially local government level.

The study was conducted in two districts of Gulu and Lira from the Acholi and Lango sub-regions respectively, chosen partly for being important centres of national, international and commercial activity in northern Uganda during and after the war. Participants of the study were drawn from a cross-section of actors, and methods used included key informant interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and a survey. The study employed combined methods guided by principles of feminist research.

Findings

Changes in Women's Economic Activities

The pre-war period was characterised by a relatively clear gender division of labour. There were some clear outlines of what women were supposed to do within the household. The main pre-war economic activity for women was subsistence farming, followed by alcohol brewing and petty trade or business. Like unemployment, casual labour was uncommon and no one depended on relief for a living. In rural areas, where the majority live, women were generally engaged in subsistence farming. If women participated in cash crop production, they mainly offered labour as part of the household and the whole process was controlled by men. Production was mainly for family subsistence and the level of commercialisation amongst women was low. In the pre-war period, there was also a clear line between cash and food crops. The relatively clear-cut division in roles and market segments dramatically changed with the war.

The war period was specifically characterised by ruptures in the traditional and social fabric of communities. People were forced to flee and stay in camps, others were abducted or killed. Grave insecurity brought about a dramatic fall in the productive capacity of the region. For the first time some women reported “doing nothing”, i.e. unemployed without any meaningful return to labour. A sizeable number became completely dependent on relief. There was limited access to land. Tilling the land for subsistence production was no longer a viable option for the majority for fear of rebel attacks. Only a few could sneak to the gardens to dig for a few hours. It was a period of hardship and survival of the fittest.

The war forced women to enter trade/business, albeit on small scale, as one of the major sources of livelihood. There was a shift in household power relations/dynamics. Survival of the family came to be heavily dependent on women as most men died or were engaged in the war. The war had a demobilising effect on men in that, since their movement was curtailed, they resorted to drinking alcohol as a way to occupy themselves. Hence the war fundamentally reversed household roles. Family survival became heavily dependent on women – they became the breadwinners. This trend has continued into the post-war period, with long term implications.

Women Storm the Public World

The war situation notably hurled women out of the household environs to seek survival in the outer space. Although there was limited movement for all, women had by necessity to move out and look for food. Therefore, the war triggered an expansion of women's activities, mobility and public presence, which has influenced the nature of women's economic participation in the post-war era.

Post-war Male Relative Absence in Household Provisioning

As the population picks up the pieces in the wake of relative peace, women continue to bear the load created in the war period. In most households, there was a consistent pattern of male relative absence and women's strong presence. Many women live either as single mothers, old and/or widowed, or in relationships where spouses contribute little or nothing. In the majority of households women reportedly continue to shoulder the burden of family sustenance and take care of all related responsibilities. The majority of men, if not maimed and/or physically or psychologically demobilised, are reportedly still stuck in the war period situation, where they spent most of their time consuming alcohol. The war gave rise to the normalisation of negative masculinities, in a sense that men lost the major sources of their generative power of participating in provisioning and decision making. What is left for most of these men is to hold onto the destructive power of dominance and violence.

Post-war Women's Economic Activity

On the whole, farming and trade/business still come at the top of women's economic activities, followed by formal/paid employment and brewing alcohol. The period of relative peace has seen

a return of most of the hitherto displaced population to rural areas, where most women have taken to agriculture in proportions which almost equal the pre-war period. Commercial farming companies from the rest of the country, but also from outside Uganda, have established large farming businesses where women are engaged as contract farmers, growing oilseed crops (like sunflower and soya beans) in particular for sale to particular companies. Women continue to comprise the majority of market vendors and street vendors (evening markets). Some generally peddle merchandise, selling different items such as foodstuffs, cereals, vegetables, fish, and second-hand clothes. Brewing and selling local beer such as *ajon*, *kwete*, *malwa*, and local *waragi* seems to have declined in the post-war period, but remains a major economic activity.

There has been tremendous expansion of women's trade in food crops. They have turned traditional subsistence crops into tradable crops in addition to the usual cash crops of cotton and tobacco. All types of agricultural produce find their way into the market (both local and beyond borders). Crops such as millet, groundnuts, potatoes, cassava, vegetables, fruit and maize are all in high demand. Cross-border trade is a lucrative business for women, with some women selling their merchandise and produce to consumers as far as Juba in South Sudan. Almost any food item which can be grown in northern Uganda is currently sold in Juba.

Women are taking advantage of the peace dividends to craft an identity of their own. From all the field discussions, it is evident that there are many post-war economic opportunities and women are involved in a lot of initiatives to better their lives, despite existing difficulties. The war, despite its very negative impact, has also effected significant positive changes in people's lives; new developments in the community, such as trade, have increased and communities, especially women from rural areas, have learned new survival skills.

Impact of War, Women's Economic Participation and Empowerment

War had a profound impact on household economies and power relations. Men and women were displaced and abducted, and both sexes experienced untold suffering. However, in terms of dislocation, there seemed to be more impact on men, making them more or less absent from the household both in physical and symbolic terms. What this has meant is that women have become central and explicitly visible in the household economy. The linkage between this economic visibility of women and their levels of empowerment, especially the impact on political participation, is important to understand. The findings show a very high involvement of women in family decision making, showing a high level of empowerment. However, the scaling up of women's cash-related activities, coupled with a relative return to peace, is a continuation of new roles, which have now taken a new turn where women tend to shoulder more responsibilities. In the post-war situation, women have to ensure family welfare, as well as family development, in the face of relatively-diminished male contribution, in real and symbolic terms. Informants argued that, with economic power, women had made a tremendous change in the management of household affairs. It has impacted on women's positions in terms of decision making and the ownership/control of resources. The number of women taking the bulk of family decisions currently is now sizeable in northern Uganda; this also has an impact on the general picture of women's power in the community. The situation is, therefore, clearly one of relative empowerment of women, both as individuals and as a collective.

Women's Economic Activities and Political Participation

The limitation of this study is that no general election has taken place since the return of relative peace. Therefore, it is not possible to make a clear linkage, for example, between women's economic visibility and occupation of key leadership positions. However, a scan through different spaces/programmes shows that women are represented more than ever before. Women's levels of awareness is high in terms of their rights to participate in political and economic activities.

Community Level

At the community level we were told that women were increasingly selected to be part of various decision-making spaces and community programmes. About half of the women surveyed, with a

slight majority from Gulu district, indicated that they were able to influence public opinion and community members.

Women have also formed and joined groups under different development programmes, such as NAADS, or through organisations like the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). Once in a group, women sometimes ascend to upper-level and even leadership positions within the group. Several public activities can form training spaces for women in leadership. Though the political impact of these spaces should not be exaggerated, they form an opening to the otherwise airtight recruitment system of leadership which mostly favours men.

Broader Political Participation

Although we saw increased possibilities at community level, the broader picture is that, as women struggle for family survival and development almost single-handedly, men continue to dominate the political arena. In this way, patriarchy is surely recreating itself to absorb the new identity of men who may or may not contribute to household welfare, but still remain the primary custodians of political power. Women are severely underrepresented. Currently, representation of women in positions seems to be limited to the mandatory one-third at local government level and the district woman seat at the national (parliament) level.

In terms of other modes of political participation, the study findings found that, on average, about seven out of every ten women were willing to vote for a woman for the positions of president, constituency MP or chairpersons of LCV, III and I if they were to contest.¹ On account of the belief that the position of MP is “easier”, there is more reported willingness to vote for a woman for an MP position than for all the other positions named above.

The correlation of political power with income brings out interesting dimensions. Accordingly, 40 percent of the women who said they were unable to influence opinions of other community members fall in the lowest income category. Furthermore, 97 percent of the women in the lowest income group said they did not hold any position in local or central government, implying that low income is strongly associated with exclusion from government positions.

At the general level, most of the women participated in electoral processes but their role was mostly as campaign managers, or they offered what they described as moral support. Women who took part in elections as campaign managers cut across all income groups meaning that, with the exception of voting, campaigning for a candidate is probably one of the most inclusive roles which women play across the board. Therefore, income levels have an influence on broader political participation. Although not all those with high incomes are able or interested in standing for public office, they still do influence decisions at various levels. Women with low income levels also do participate but tend to be limited to supportive roles. On the whole, women’s influence at the community and state level seem not to be in tandem with their great presence in household sustenance.

Where do women put their money? How come the translation of economic power into political power is somehow constrained? Critical analysis indicates that the majority of women are firmly located in basic family survival and that the money they make is not likely to be invested in building political influence. Women’s workloads are overburdening; women are visibly working hard but returns are too small to make a breakthrough; there are limits of collectivisation in groups without a transformational political agenda; negative masculinities and reshaped patriarchy characterised by violence and continued male dominance limit women’s progress.

¹ Uganda’s local government and administration is structured in five levels. These include Local Council One (LCI) at the village level, LC II at the parish, LC III at the sub-county level for rural areas (or city or municipality division for urban areas), LC IV at the municipality level and LC V at the district level. While LC III and V are body corporate governments that can sue and be sued, the rest are administrative levels.

Potentials for social change are apparent as far as peace and expansion opportunities exist. Women's empowerment at the community and family level has been catapulted, not only due to women's engagement in economic activities but also due to the fact that the impact of the war disorganised male familial power to a large degree. Women's responsibilities in the family have grown and their decision making has been enhanced both in- and outside the family.

Factors Limiting Broader Political Participation

Women's broader political participation beyond mandatory positions, especially in local government, is minimal owing to a number of factors:

- limited resources available to women;
- overwhelming domestic workload;
- lack of a political transformational agenda in groups in which women take part;
- negative masculinities characterised by heightened male dominance and violence.

These conditions imply the need to take particular steps in order to leverage economic opportunities for women's empowerment and political participation. We view these as entry points, outlined below.

Entry Points for Advocacy and Intervention

1. Strategic institutional development to enable women to take advantage of post-war economic opportunities;
2. Enact by-laws and ordinances for affirmative action for women (and the poor) in local government contracts;
3. Harmonise interventions, limit excessive collectivisation;
4. Strengthen and utilise community development functions;
5. Mobilise men to reconstruct positive masculinities;
6. Politicise women's groups;
7. Mobilise women to vote for women;
8. Address gender-based violence and the culture of violence in politics (popularising the Domestic Violence Act 2010 could be a starting point).

1. Context Background

Northern Uganda is seen to be emerging from one of Africa's most brutal conflicts. From the mid-1980s, the region experienced a vicious war for over two decades. The genesis of the war was an anti-government rebellion, intensified by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) faction led by Joseph Kony. As the two parties battled, civilian populations were subjected to untold suffering: killings, abductions, torture, sexual abuse and displacement². The war had an enormous economic impact, destroying infrastructure, markets, investment, livelihoods; drastically altering the demographic and skills base of the region; compounding countrywide divisions especially between the north and south of Uganda. Analysis of poverty trends show gross disadvantages in the northern region: the north has the highest rate of poverty compared to other regions of Uganda at 64 percent in rural and 40 percent in urban areas (see Table 1).

Unique aspects of northern Uganda

- Insecurity
- Internal displacement
- Large under-utilised land mass
- High population growth rates
- Very high poverty levels
- HIV/AIDS threat
- Pastoralism
- Modest diversification and low asset base
- Historical marginalisation

Table 1: Uganda: Percentage of Poverty Estimates by Region 2005/2006³

	Urban	Rural
Central	5.5	20.9
Eastern	16.9	37.5
Northern	39.7	64.2 ⁴
Western	9.3	21.4

According to the government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for northern Uganda, most welfare indices are poor in the north largely because of the conflict and the resultant weak state institutions.

While the Juba Peace Talks failed to reach a signed peace agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda, a period of relative peace and security has since been enjoyed in northern Uganda, nonetheless leading to a renewed sense of hope regarding the rebuilding of the region's economy. This optimism has seen the government, development partners and investors all planning either to make the most of the opportunities which may present themselves in the north's post-conflict economy, or to contribute to peace through new development programmes and initiatives. These have included the government's overarching PRDP for northern Uganda, which states emphasis on revitalising the region's economy.⁵ The months of peace have also enabled large numbers of people from internally displaced persons' (IDPs) camps to return home. By the end of 2007, the overall number of IDPs living in camps in and around northern Uganda had reduced from a high of 1.8 million to 1.3 million, as people moved out of

2 D. Mulumba (1998). 'Refugee Women and the Trauma of Encampment in Uganda', *East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights*. Volume 5, No. 1, pp.32-44; D. Mulumba (2002). "The Women's Movement and Conflict Resolution in Uganda" in A. M. Tripp, and J. Kwesiga (eds.) (2002). *The Women's Movement in Uganda: History, Challenges, and Prospects*. Kampala, Fountain Publishers. Fountain Series in Gender Studies.

3 Republic of Uganda (RoU) (2008). *Spatial Trends of Poverty and Inequality in Uganda*, Kampala: UBOS (Uganda Bureau of Statistics) and ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute).

4 Ibid. As of 2005/06, poverty rates for selected districts in the north were recorded as follows: Gulu 67 percent, Lira 56 percent, Kitgum 78 percent and Pader 76 percent.

5 Government of Uganda (GoU) (2007). *Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) 2007-2010*. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

camps into transit sites or returned to their areas of origin. According to the OCHA report of 2008, 784,376 people were still resident in IDP camps, 536,717 had returned to their villages of origin and 372,439 were residing in locations other than IDP camps in the areas of return.⁶ Accordingly, the Lango sub-region had advanced furthest, with almost the entire population (99.7 percent) having moved out of the camps, primarily to their areas of origin.

The relative return of peace and the post-war recovery have opened up a new area of inquiry related to the peace economy. Historically it has been established that the aftermath of war presents itself as a double-edged sword, with fractures and wounds on the one hand and reconstruction and rehabilitation opportunities on the other.⁷ With respect to gender relations there are inevitable changes that occur, some of which create opportunities to redefine the power relations between men and women, which have been referred to as wartime gains.⁸

This study is concerned with the area of gender dynamics in the post-war economy, particularly focusing on women's positioning in the peace economy. The study also draws on the principles of UN Resolution 1325 which requires the active participation of women in order to attain lasting peace in communities affected by armed conflict.

Principles of UNSCR 1325⁹

- a) Protection and respect of human rights of women and girls particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;
- b) End of impunity and prosecution of those responsible for gender-based abuses during and after conflict;
- c) Consideration of the different and special needs of women and girls during reparation and resettlement and to take into account the needs of their dependants when planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration;
- d) The adoption of a gender perspective in all aspects of the peace process...
- e) Inclusion of women at all decision-making levels...

In research conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) with EASSI in 2004 to measure performance on the African Gender Development Index (AGDI), Uganda scored only 9 percent measured alongside UNSCR 1325. The government had not ratified the resolution and did not have a law to operationalise it. The report noted that there was relative policy commitment (represented by the Policy on IDPs and the MGSLD institutional mechanism) but it was gravely under-resourced and hence not able to have substantive impact on programmes.¹⁰

This dismal performance on 1325 meant that Uganda was not prepared to include women in peace processes. In the official peace talks which commenced in July 2006 in Juba, the team to represent the government side was all male. There was no deliberate attempt by either the Chief Mediator's office or the actors at the negotiating table to include women in the process. In October 2007, women under the umbrella of the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) organised a march for peace to celebrate the UN 1325 Resolution. They demanded that the government ensure at least one-third of the Juba Peace Talk team was made up of women to address their concerns.¹¹ As a result of the lobbying of the women's coalition, the government included some of the women's interests. The coalition attained observer status during the Juba Peace process and four women were also included in the government team.

⁶ OCHA (2008). *Uganda Humanitarian Situation Report, 1-29 February 2008*. New York

⁷ A. M. Tripp et al (2009). *African women's movements: changing political landscapes*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁸ S. Meintjes et al (2001). *The Aftermath: Women in Post-conflict Transformation*. London: Zed Books.

⁹ Adapted from S. Ayoo (2009). *Women and Peace: Assessing Women's Participation in the Juba Peace Process from the Lens of UNSCR 1325, Study Report*. Care International: Kampala, p.8; AMwA (2007). *Women, Peace and Security: Lessons in Domesticating UN Resolution 1325 in Africa*. Kampala, p.9-11.

¹⁰ UNECA (2005). *The African Gender and Development Index: Uganda Report*. Addis Ababa.

¹¹ EASSI (2008). *Uganda's Progress in Women's Rights Advancement 2000-2006*. Kampala.

The involvement of women in the Juba peace process was further catalysed by the UNIFEM regional office. To make their presence felt, the women started with a peace caravan to bring new thinking to the peace talks. According to a research study commissioned by CARE International, women organised the taking of the Women's Peace Torch to the government and LRA teams in Juba in November 2007. The caravan was launched by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Rebecca Kadaga. The peace caravan went through districts affected by conflict. The negotiating teams in Juba had reached a stalemate when the women took the Peace Torch; for the first time, the negotiating teams shook hands when they received the torch. The women urged them to continue with the peace talks. Consequently, the women gained representation on the negotiating table, albeit very marginal (one out of 27 on the government side, and 3 out of 30 on the LRA side).¹² They also gained observer status. However, on the whole it is clear that women were marginal to the peace process and this undoubtedly impacts on their position in post-war political processes.

Currently, the Government of Uganda has in place an Action Plan which combines the UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820, as well as the Goma Declaration, aimed at promoting women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.¹³ It is hoped that this action plan will be used to firmly infuse a gender perspective into the PRDP. However, beyond these government documents, it is important to understand the momentum in the immediate post-war period, what kinds of economic and political opportunities exist for women, and how they are located within the post-war landscape.

It is therefore important to begin by looking at the peace dividends, the nature of those dividends and the direction they are taking. We analyse women's participation in the post-war economy, how women take advantage of emerging opportunities, the structure of the post-war economy and related policies in the recovery process, as well as the implications on women's political participation and empowerment at the household, community and state level, particularly at the local government level. In this way, the study attempts to tease out the different openings in the post-war economy, as well as exclusions and their implications for women as one of the social groups upon which the disintegrating effects of the war have had a big impact.

1.1 Rationale and Approach

Northern Uganda has experienced war for over two decades. War inevitably transforms family structures and redefines responsibilities in a way which impacts on how people participate in peace and recovery periods. New businesses may emerge, women take on roles initially defined as men's, and political opportunities may open up to women, especially in periods of crisis and transition. Social institutions may decay, be destroyed or reshaped to suit emerging circumstances with far-reaching implications for peace and recovery.

Although it is difficult to argue that the war has ended, there is relative calm in northern Uganda since the commencement of the Juba Peace process, which has at least created a semblance of peace. Against this background, there are various recovery initiatives ranging from government actions, interventions from international agencies, civil society and the private sector, aimed at rebuilding the war-torn region. These include the government PRDP, aimed towards revitalising the region's economy.

This study is women focused, examining ways in which women participate in the post-war economy and how this influences their decision-making power across the societal spectrum, ranging from the household and community to local government levels. This kind of analysis is

¹² The present report represents the outcome of a study by CARE International to assess women's participation in the Juba Peace Process (JPP) through the lens of UNSCR 1325.

¹³ RoU (2008). *The Uganda Action Plan on UN Council Security Resolutions 1325 & 1820 and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region*. Uganda.

important at this stage, as we are able to understand how women are positioning themselves in the post-war economy and its linkage with broader political participation. This understanding will guide interventions and advocacy in this region as far as women's positions are concerned. As has been rightly argued, timing is very important in consolidating wartime gains for women.¹⁴ The right timing to consolidate such gains is in the immediate post-war period in order to seize the dividends of peace for a broader transformation of gender relations.

More often than not, post-conflict reconstruction is viewed in terms of projects and programmes to lift the populations out of the predicaments engendered by destructive armed conflicts. This can condition people to be beneficiaries as opposed to actors. With regard to women, this perspective becomes even stronger due to the fact that their war experiences tend to be different from those of men.

From another angle, post-conflict situations raise questions about how women as actors are positioned. Specifically, there are questions over political participation, given that full and effective political participation is a necessary component for reconstruction.¹⁵ Political participation in this sense is a broad term which covers all processes in a continuum, including both traditional (and conventional) and non-traditional politics.¹⁶ Essentially, political participation relates to the different mechanisms for public expression, and ideally exerts influence on political, economic and social decisions made in a certain entity. Although this understanding often starts and ends with a focus on holding public office, there is an understanding that political participation is broader and includes other areas of political activity such as lobbying, demonstrations, self-organisation and petitions.¹⁷ In relation to women, this broad spectrum therefore spans from the concern with leadership positions (elected and appointed), because it is important that women are part of those structures and decision-making levels in those positions for the positioning of women in community activities at all levels.

This study attempts to analyse the link between women's economic positions in the post-war economy and their level of political participation. Given the oft-mentioned argument that increased economic power determines political voice, how do we place women in post-war northern Uganda? What are the gains? What are the deficits and how can these deficits be plugged?

1.2 Objectives

The overall objective is to map out economic opportunities for women in post-war northern Uganda and implications for their broader political participation and empowerment.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the current status of women's economic participation in the post-war economy of northern Uganda;
2. To examine the ways in which women are taking advantage of opportunities in the post-war economy in northern Uganda;
3. To analyse the linkage between women's post-war economic participation and their political participation and empowerment at household, community and state levels.

¹⁴ Meintjes et al. (2001). *Op. Cit.*

¹⁵ M. E. Greenberg and E. Zuckerman (2006). 'The Gender Dimensions of Post-conflict Reconstruction', *Research Paper no. 2006/62*. UNU – WIDER, United Nations University.

¹⁶ U. Thakkar (1985). *Women's Political Participation*. Economic and Political Weekly 20 (30).

¹⁷ EASSI & International Alert (2009). *Assessing the Impact of Women's Political Participation in Countries Emerging from Conflict: Workshop report on Feminist methodology*. London.

2. A Note on the Study Methodology

2.1 Study Area and Design

The study was conducted in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions¹⁸. Two districts, namely Lira and Gulu, were deliberately selected. Apart from being key centres of activity during the war, Gulu and Lira districts are currently important centres of national, international and commercial activity in northern Uganda. From Gulu, one urban area (Bardege Division) and one rural area (Bungatira Sub-county) were purposively selected for the study. For Lira district, Ojwina Division represented the urban area, while Apala Sub-county was chosen to represent the rural. This geographical diversity was to allow for rural-urban diversity and possible comparisons. Study participants were drawn from a broad spectrum of economic activities and spheres in Gulu and Lira, including formal and informal activities, agriculture, trade, and business to mention but a few.

The study design was cross-sectional, employing a feminist methodology taking women as active participants in the analysis of their situation. Ingrained in the study is not only the assessment of women's status but also the exploration for potential for social change within the arena of the post-war economy and its linkage with women's political participation and empowerment. To achieve this ambition, the study employed combined methods, drawing on qualitative and quantitative approaches. While quantitative data provided for broader descriptions of the study's participants, deeper explanations and reflections are drawn mainly from the qualitative data.

2.2 Sample Selection and Size

The participants in the survey part of the study were intentionally selected within chosen villages with the help of local leaders on the basis of social economic indicators, type of economic activities in which they are engaged and type of household. A total of 200 women, consisting of one adult female selected from each household, participated in the survey. Within each sub-county or division, one parish was selected in consultation with research assistants and area leaders, especially if it was deemed appropriate for the study. Furthermore, within each parish, three to four wards and/or villages were selected to participate in the survey. The respondents for the survey were selected within each chosen village. Each researcher was allocated a separate village on a daily basis and worked with a guide (usually an LCI official or person knowledgeable on the geography and demographic setup of the area) to lead the researcher through the villages. Allocating a research assistant per village was to guard against double visits to households by researchers. Only one person (adult female) from each household participated in the survey.

The sample for the survey included only adult females. An adult female was defined as a woman over 18 years of age and who was identified with the household. Considered women included a woman head of household, spouse, caretaker or guardian. Visitors, relatives, or workers were not considered for the study. Care was taken in deriving a sample which included married and unmarried women, widows, as well as female heads of households. In urban areas, care was taken to ensure that even one-room households were included, although they might have been shared together with other families in one structure.

¹⁸ Acholi comprises Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Amuru districts, while Lango comprises Lira, Apac, Oyam and Dokolo districts.

For in-depth interviews and key informants, the team selected people of different categories, including government officials, local leaders, women's organisations and CSOs, private sector representatives and religious leaders. Key informants were purposively selected based on their knowledge and position held in their respective areas.

For case studies, two women with elaborate stories regarding the topic under study were chosen per district to provide detailed accounts of their life histories and the way they related to women's economic engagement, political participation and empowerment. These were chosen from both an urban division and/or rural sub-county. Selection was based on the potential richness of the story and willingness of the particular women to participate in some lengthy engagement with the researchers, exploring their lives in detail. Table 2 below is an illustrative summary of the study participants.

Table 2: Summary of Study Sample

	District	Gulu			Lira			Total
		District level	Bungatira Sub-county	Bardege Division	District level	Apala Sub-county	Ojwina Division	
A	Key Informants							
	Women's Organisations			1			1	2
	Community Development Officers (CDO I/C Gender)		1			1		2
	Government Officials including CAOs, Trade and Industry Officers	1			1			2
	Local Political Leaders – LCV and III	1			1			2
	NAADS	1			1			2
	Women In-depth Interviews		10	10		10	10	40
	MPs (male and female)	2			2			4
B	Focus Group Discussions (no. of participants)							
	Women – including widows		12	13		14	10	49
	Mixed (men and women)			15			10	25
C	Case Studies/ Life Histories		2	2		2	2	8
D	Survey		50	50		50	50	200
	Total	5	75	91	5	77	83	336

2.3 Study Methods and Tools

Study methods included:

1. Structured and semi-structured interviews with individual women with the use of a questionnaire.
2. Key informant interviews and in-depth discussions.
3. Focus group discussions with selected women, men and local leaders.
4. Case studies focusing on the life histories of four women from each sub-county/division to capture and illuminate their unique voices and experiences.
5. Document review and analysis, involving a wide range of relevant documents such as research reports on women's economic and political participation. Pertinent policies, workshop reports and publications by different stakeholders were also reviewed.

6. Factsheets to capture specific data from the district, such as the number of women's groups, mixed or not mixed, women's positions in political and community leadership, composition of NAADS groups at the sub-county level, and the number of women who have acquired loans from different MFIs and their participation in district contracts.

Use of multiple methods and tools enabled researchers to understand the issues surrounding women's economic participation in relation to decision making and political influence in post-war northern Uganda. The different methods complimented each other, with the triangulation of the methods enabling the research team to tap into the deeply-embedded gender relations in economic and political opportunities.

In undertaking the field work, research assistants (RAs) were recruited locally in the districts to assist in data collection.¹⁹ The RAs also doubled as interpreters where necessary, for example during focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in villages. RAs also wrote short reports on their field impressions, which were discussed as a first step to analysis.

2.4 Data Management, Analysis and Report Writing

For quantitative data, completed questionnaires were reviewed on a daily basis by the researchers to ensure completeness and accuracy. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Frequencies were run, and percentages and cross-tabulations used to analyse and interpret the findings.

Qualitative data was analysed thematically. This involved developing broad themes and examining relationships underlying the different explanations. This analysis involved deep feminist methodological insights on women's representation and agency.

Quality control was achieved through various means. The questionnaire was pre-tested to check its suitability, reliability, coherence and clarity. The research assistants were given training on the survey tool. The training involved a thorough discussion of each question to ensure that the assistants understood the spirit of the question and the data required. Furthermore, the advantage here was also that the RAs were people based in the districts and they helped buttress context issues, which significantly improved the quality of the questions. The researchers checked the completed questionnaires. The researchers supervised the research and also participated in data collection. They also organised and participated in separate and joint writing, as well as report review sessions to collectively ensure quality. Overall quality control was also achieved through review meetings and discussions with EASSI and International Alert.

EASSI and International Alert organised a validation exercise where tentative findings were presented in the two districts. This exercise helped to validate the key interpretations of the post-war experience. It also helped to augment the thinking and analysis around the changing gender relations at household and community levels. Indeed, this process confirmed the need for accountability to those researched, as popularised by feminist researchers.

¹⁹ The RAs were as follows: Lira: Teddy Atim, Andrew Egwal, Deborah Amka and Gracelyn Akong; Gulu: Christine Akum, Isabella Amony and Bosco Okullo.

3. Mapping the Status of Women's Economic Activities

The study tracked economic changes with regard to women's economic activities. This section highlighted a mapping of the women's economic activity landscape against the general background of what predominated in the pre- and war period.

3.1 Pre-war Economic Activities

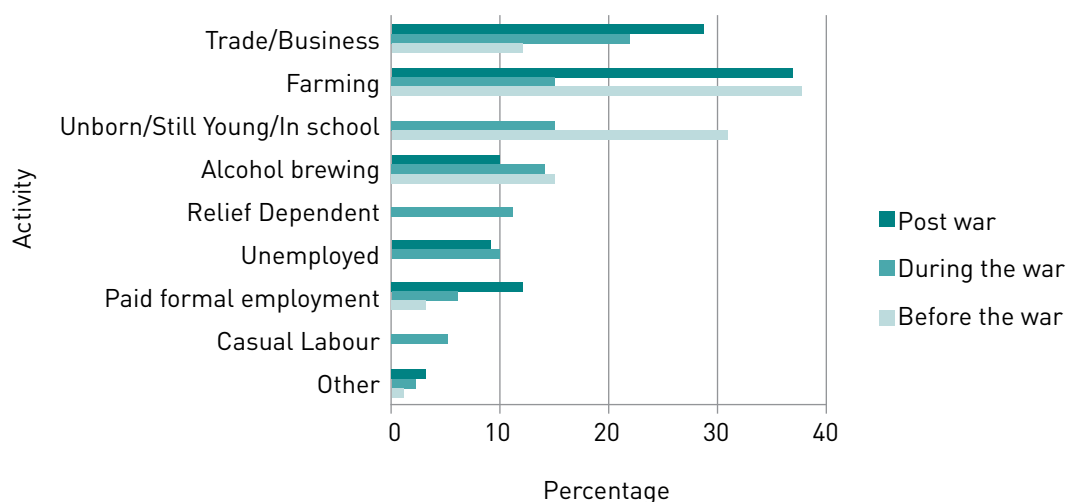
Accordingly, the pre-war period was characterised by a relatively clear gender division of labour. There were some clear outlines of what women were supposed to do within the household. The table below shows the main economic activities before, during and after the war for the women interviewed in Gulu and Lira.

Table 3: Main Economic Activities for Women Before, During and After War Period

	Before the War		During the War ²⁰		Post-war	
Main economic activity	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Farming	82	38	34	15	74	37
Alcohol brewing	33	15	31	14	19	10
Unborn/Still young/In school	68	31	35	15	0	0
Trade/Business	25	12	51	22	57	29
Paid formal employment	7	3	14	6	23	12
Casual labour	0	0	11	5	0	0
Relief dependent	0	0	26	11	0	0
Unemployed	0	0	23	10	18	9
Other	3	1	5	2	6	3
Total	218	100	230	100	197	100

As seen from Table 3, the main economic activity before the war was mainly subsistence farming, followed by alcohol brewing and petty trade or business. While unemployment was unheard of, very few women engaged in paid employment. Like unemployment, casual labour was nearly absent and no one depended on relief for a living before the war. This situation is further illustrated in Figure 1 below.

²⁰ Note: Figures before and during the war are based on multiple responses (this is why the total number is above 200) while figures after the war are based on valid cases with a single response (which is why the total number is below 200).

Figure 1: Main Economic Activities Before, During and After War Era

In rural areas, where the majority live, women were generally engaged in subsistence farming for their livelihoods. This was mainly subsistence production for their own household, where goods (mainly food) were produced by individuals for immediate consumption. If women participated in cash crop production, they mainly offered labour as part of the household and the whole process was controlled by men. Production was mainly for household consumption. However, a small amount of food would be sold in the nearby markets to cater for some basic needs such as salt, paraffin and soap. In urban areas, women mainly dealt in small-scale trade, also for immediate consumption needs.

The level of commercialisation among women in the pre-war period was negligible, with a low level of goods exchange. Women were largely operating within the narrow parameters of the household. Making and sale of local brew (*ajon, maluwa, enguli*) seemed to be the major cash-related economic activity for women. There was also a clear line between cash and food crops: cash crops included cotton and tobacco, yet non-tradable food crops had not yet become tradable crops. The cash crop economy was heavily controlled by men and, in this sense, the cash economy was male dominated, since cash crops were the main source of cash income at the time. This relatively clear-cut division in roles and market segments was thrown into disarray by the war, as we analyse in the sections which follow.

3.2 War and Necessity: Women's Activities During the War

The war period was specifically characterised by ruptures in the traditional and social fabrics of communities. People were forced to flee and stay in camps, others were abducted and/or killed. Grave insecurity brought about a dramatic fall in the productive capacity of the region. For the first time, some women reported “doing nothing”, i.e. unemployed without any meaningful return to their labour. A sizeable number became completely dependent on relief. There was limited access to land. Tilling the land for subsistence production was no longer a viable option for the majority for fear of rebel attacks. Only a few could sneak to the gardens to dig for a few hours. It was a period of hardship and survival of the fittest. It forced women to enter into trade/business, albeit on small scale, as one of the major sources of livelihood.

You know during the war, when we were mostly packed in the camps, our activities were limited depending on the situation at hand. At times when you could hear or learn that the rebels had gone to other parts of the district, you could sneak home and collect firewood for sale in the camp.

(INTERVIEW WITH WOMEN, FGD GULU, BUNGATIRA SUB-COUNTY, NOVEMBER 2009).

There was a shift in household power relations/dynamics. Survival of the family came to be heavily dependent on women as most men died or were engaged in the war. The men who remained behind were insecure and would mainly stay in camps while women went out to look for food. Some women would sneak out of the camp to go and dig in nearby areas. Others engaged in petty trade within the camps. The war had a demobilising effect on men in that, since their movement was curtailed, they resorted to drinking alcohol as a way to occupy themselves. Therefore, the war fundamentally reversed household roles. This trend has continued into the post-war period, with long term implications, as shall be discussed in the coming sections.

The most notable change which has come in women's economic activities is the expansion of trade- and cash-income-related activity. The level of commercialisation has expanded. Foods and fruits, which were hitherto only for consumption, became highly profitable goods. Every food item could be sold in this period. To this effect, one respondent in Gulu commented that, for example, 'it was unheard of for one to be selling papaya [fruits] in the days before the war'²¹.

The brewing of local beer remained at almost the same level as the pre-war period, but became a major source of livelihood for women. Women were also operating small eateries within the camp, while others operated some small shops, commonly known as kiosks. As the casualisation of labour services emerged, women also worked on the construction sites of health centres and learning centres within the camps. They would fetch water for a fixed rate of pay for the construction sites.

Women also started the revolving loan system of saving. Members of the group would pool together an agreed-upon, specified amount of money periodically. The pooled funds would be given to an individual in a group. This would be invested in small businesses, such as the sale of foodstuffs, charcoal and brewing. Other women provided labour for wages, e.g. some worked in people's gardens or in eateries. In the war, new businesses also emerged, such as the sale of humanitarian relief items such as *posho* (maize meal), beans, cooking oil and household equipment. In a bid to survive, women were reportedly selling food items to buy other necessities. Other women would register "ghost" beneficiaries and receive surplus relief items which would subsequently be sold.

What is to be noted is that the war situation hurled women out of household environs to look for survival in the outer space. Although there was limited movement for all, women had, by necessity, to move out and look for food. They had to be much more mobile than ever before. Therefore, the war triggered an expansion of women's activities and their public presence. The normalisation of relative visibility and mobility for women has, without doubt, influenced the nature of women's economic participation in the post-war era.

3.3 Women's Economic Activities in the Post-war Era

As the population picks up the pieces in the wake of relative peace, women continue to bear the loads created during the war period. In most households studied there was a consistent pattern of male relative absence and women's strong presence. We found women living either as single mothers, old, widowed or living in relationships where the spouses contributed little, if anything at all.

Whereas the general picture in the community was that women were largely living alone, an examination of the marital status of the 200 women who participated in the study shows that the majority of women (67 percent) said they were in some form of a marriage relationship (see Table 4 below).

21 Interview with woman, Gulu, November 2009.

Table 4: Marital Status of Survey Respondents by District

Marital Status	Lira		Gulu		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
never married	5	5	9	9	14	7
married (monogamous)	53	55	48	48	101	52
married (polygamous)	16	17	14	14	30	15
separated/divorced	7	7	8	8	15	8
Widowed	15	16	21	21	36	18
Total	96	100	100	100	196	100

According to the data, 52 percent of the women were in monogamous marriages, 15 percent were in polygamous marriages, 8 percent were separated or divorced, 18 percent were widowed, while 7 percent had never married. The majority of the women were married, i.e. 67 percent. Of those married, 48 percent were in customary marriages, 26 percent were cohabiting, 6 percent had had a church marriage, while Muslim and civil marriages each comprised 1 percent. Since the sample was not adequately representative, it is not possible to push the argument as to whether the majority women are married or not. Additionally, some research assistants indicated that marital status was a tricky question for women, because married status is the most socially respected and, hence, some women might indicate they were married when they in fact are not, just to fit within the framework of ideal womanhood. As our data is based on the responses of the women this could also be a possibility.

The real point to be made, however, is that, in the majority of households, women reportedly continued to shoulder the load of family sustenance. The majority of the men, if not maimed and/or physically/psychologically demobilised, is reportedly still relatively stuck in the wartime situation, where they spent most of their time consuming alcohol. The case of Abeja (Lira) below vividly demonstrates the ways in which a number of women are living with men who have been totally crushed by war and hence have to bear the burden single handedly.

Case of Abeja - Lira

I am a customarily married 39-year-old woman, who drop[ped] out [of education in] primary 5. I got married at 18 years and I have 9 children. My husband and I were farmers, and we used to do both garden work and taking care of animals, we had about 9 cows and 21 goats at that time and it is through these activities that we were able to take care of our children and also send them to school. After 32 years of happiness, my life changed due to the war. My son was captured and I have never seen him to date. My husband developed mental problems due to the torture by the rebels.

We lived in Obim camp as [it was] the safest place. I did nothing for a living and survived from World Food Programme aid. I returned to an empty home in 2006 due to the unbearable camp life and the relative peace in the village. We engaged in farming and invested the savings in brewing. The war has changed everything in my life. I used not to brew alcohol and had never thought of such but I had no alternative. I am the husband and wife of this home. Look, my husband is like a baby, he does nothing because he cannot even think for himself.

I have just joined a women's group. I have also been attending training conducted by the Church of Uganda on modern farming methods. Other women have got loans for their businesses but I am unable to acquire a loan because I have to remain at home caring for my mentally-disturbed husband. I have a heavy burden of catering for the children, especially their education and my husband's mental condition.

The war has had a clear effect on the definitions and manifestations of masculinity and, as we shall analyse, patriarchy has had to recreate itself to match these new definitions. The war gave rise to the normalisation of negative masculinities, in the sense that men lost the major sources of

their generative power: participating in provisioning and making decisions to that effect. What is left for most of the men is to hold onto the destructive power of dominance and violence. Some of the reasons for the disconnection between the expansion of women's economic presence and their broader political participation are to be found in this reinvention of patriarchy.

The way to understand the roles of women in the post-war era is to acknowledge that the war situation compelled women to innovate to ensure the survival of the household. This innovation moved them into the larger outer space, outside the realm of the household. The case of Lakot below makes the point clearly:

Case of Lakot - Gulu

I dropped out [of education] in primary 4, and am aged 40 with 10 children. My customarily married husband, then in the army (Obote Government), used to provide everything while I stayed at home to do household chores. I was elected a leader of the women in the barracks and my role was to solve family conflicts. We ran in different directions when Museveni overthrew the government in 1986. I went back home with my 2 kids having failed to trace him [my husband]. I engaged in cultivation and brewing local alcohol (*malwa* and *waragi*) to cater for my children. The Lakwena war forced us to move into town (Gulu), where I started selling charcoal and also collecting water on construction sites. I opened up a small kiosk out of my savings and I could sell salt, onions, cooking oil, fish and other small things. When my children grew up, they helped me in the kiosk while I engaged in trade produce. I would buy produce from villages such as *sim sim*, bananas, beans, maize for resale in town. This was disrupted as I had to look after my daughter who had an accident and was hospitalised for 4 months. The produce business collapsed and I resumed kiosk business again.

I joined a group of 30 women, where we collect money and give it to one member to inject into business. We usually collect an agreed amount like UGX 2,000 per week. I invested my money from this group into brewing local *waragi* and *malwa*. My income started increasing and I have now even starting selling beers, *molokony* and other soft drinks.

I really think it is because of the war and suffering I faced that has changed my life. It made me think deeply because I was left alone without the support of my husband. Many women, especially all those of my group, are at least doing some small business and I think it has made a big difference to our lives. Through my good leadership and successful business, the women in my group decided to elect me as their chairperson.

What has happened in the post-war period is that there has been a further scaling up of cash-related activities by women. Women have expanded this hitherto outcome of necessity and hardship to work even harder in the realm of the cash economy. There is high market competition where profit making as a key motivating factor in the way women pursue their livelihood options has become very pronounced. Hence, women are currently individually or collectively engaged in numerous activities such as farming, trade and business, paid employment and alcohol brewing (see Table 5).

Table 5: Current Women's Activities by District

		Main activity for a living						
District		Trade/ Business	Farming	Formal/ Paid employ- ment	Alcohol brewing	Unem- ployed	Other	Total
Lira	No.	34	26	14	9	8	6	97
	% within	35	27	14	9	8	6	100
Gulu	No.	23	48	9	10	10	0	100
	% within	23	48	9	10	10	0	100
Total	No.	57	74	23	19	18	6	197
	Overall %	29	38	12	10	9	3	100

From the above responses it is noted that, on the whole, farming (38 percent) and trade/business (29 percent) still come at the top of the mentioned activities, followed by formal/paid employment (12 percent) and alcohol brewing (10 percent). Below we outline the major aspects of these activities.

3.3.1 Farming

The period of relative peace has seen a return of most of the hitherto displaced population to rural areas, where most women have taken to agriculture in proportions which almost equal the pre-war period, yet surpass the periods of instability. Commercial farming companies from the rest of the country, but also from outside Uganda, have established large farming businesses where women are engaged as contract farmers and grow oilseed crops in particular (such as sunflowers and soya beans) for sale to particular companies. Women take part in commercial agriculture either individually or collectively. Upland rice growing has been taken up by many women groups supported by different agencies such as FAO, Voluntary Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO), WFP, ACDI/VOCA, and USAID, which provide agricultural inputs as well as markets for produce. Women have exhibited the ability to change poverty trends through commercial agriculture, as well as ensure food security. With assistance from agencies such as VEDCO, women are engaged in value addition, post-harvest handling and the use of labour- and time-saving technologies. According to the Commercial Officer of Gulu District, 'women have now gone back to farming but with a business mind'²². Women were reportedly dominating farmers' groups under NAADS, a major government programme for alleviating poverty.

3.3.2 Trade

Women continue to comprise the majority of market vendors and street vendors, especially in evening markets, while some peddle various types of merchandise. They are engaged in selling different items such as foodstuffs, cereals, vegetables, fish, and second-hand clothes. Brewing and selling local beer such as *ajon*, *kwete*, *malwa*, and local *waragi* seems to have undergone a relative decline in the post-war period but remains a major economic activity. These are sold together with other beers and spirits on the market. Alcohol brewing for women, however, presents a contradiction: it is a source of income for those brewing, but simultaneously a source of misery for consumer households, as shall be demonstrated in the sections which follow.

There has been tremendous expansion of women's trade in food crops. They have turned the traditional (subsistence crops) into tradable crops, in addition to the usual cash crops of cotton and tobacco. All types of agricultural produce find their way to the market (both locally and beyond). Crops such as millet, groundnuts, potatoes, cassava, vegetables, fruits and maize are all in high demand.

Cross-border trade is a lucrative business for the women. Women sell their merchandise and produce as far away as Juba in South Sudan. Foodstuffs are even bought from other districts in order to meet the demand in Juba markets. For instance, Gulu women buy *matooke* from Mbarara and Ntungamo, while fish is obtained from Jinja and Apach districts. It was reported that women constitute a substantial number of the traders on the Juba route²³. This expansion in trade is also reflected in the entrenchment and further popularisation of the term *awaro* in Gulu District.

²² Interview with Gulu District Commercial Officer, Gulu, November 2009.

²³ It was not possible to establish the numbers of women involved in cross-border trade. However, the general opinion was that women were highly involved, especially in marketing foodstuffs.

Awaro generally means small business, but has now taken on a larger meaning of purchasing food items at a cheap price or trapping people with food items before they reach the market. In the post-war period this has taken on a new trend. Women individually or in groups now book a garden, for example of *sim sim* or maize, and take all items for sale on harvest.²⁴

It was also reported that eateries and catering services (especially small-scale ones) were currently dominated by women. Women are proprietors, suppliers and workers in the business. It was noted that the big restaurants in Gulu such as Catherina, Payero, Homecare and Matalibua, among others, are owned by women. The same restaurants, such as Catherina Hotel, are one of the two pre-qualified entities to supply food to the Gulu local government.

Life History of Santa Akonge

I dropped out of school at 17 years due to pregnancy. I subsequently married the man responsible and had a baby girl. My husband was at that time working with the Uganda Electricity Board (UEB) and I would follow him on transfer. I would only do housework. We separated in Kitgum because of the war in 1986 when the Tito Okello group forced my husband to drive them up to Sudan by force. He disappeared for very many years.

I came back without anything to stay with my mother because I could not manage staying in Kitgum alone. I asked my mum to give me start-up capital for a business. She gave me one big bull and I sold it for 4,000 in 1987. I started selling fish with the capital of 4,000. I would buy fish from Apach and sell it in Gulu main market. My friend (a fishmonger) in Gulu helped me to get a stall and allowed me to stay with her for some time. I paid the licence, medical certificate, and rent for the stall. My friend took me to Jinja to get one bag of *mukene* and she sent a little bit of money to Apach to get tilapia. Since 1988 till now, I have been in the fish business. Now I bring a pick-up of *mukene* once a month. I also sell *angala* fish from west Nile where I bring a bundle of 300 pieces after every 2 weeks. My business is approximately valued at one million shillings. Selling fish is tricky – if you bring a lot it rots. If there is a lot of rain, it is difficult to keep the fish preserved. I go to Jinja and Apach myself while I employ a girl to go to Juba for me. We formed an association called Acholi Women Fishmongers in 1995 and I am the chairperson. I have also undergone some training, for example in entrepreneurship [business, marketing, bookkeeping and customer care], from Gulu commercial officials and the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA), and a one-week training programme in microfinance.

Data from the women in-depth interviews reflect a number of benefits. The women were able to save money on their own bank accounts. They put more emphasis on the ability to meet family needs and pay school fees. They were able to purchase the basics in the home such as food, clothing, drugs, bedding and utensils, as well as save for school fees. Others have been able to rent better houses and hence move away from their camp huts. A woman from Bungatira sub-county had this to say:

Now I have some money on my account, yet I did not have any during the war. By December [2010], I want to be at least in a two-roomed permanent house.

(INTERVIEW WITH A WOMAN, BUNGATIRA SUB-COUNTY, NOVEMBER 2009)

24 Perhaps what needs to be noted here is that this vibrancy in the food market may at the same time lead to food insecurity at the household level over time. Hence there is need to plan and consciously implement food security strategies in the region in particular and the country at large.

Table 6 illustrates some of the benefits from post-war economic activities as derived from the quantitative survey.

Table 6: Benefits from Post-war Economic Activities

Benefit	No.	%
None	31	33
Pay school fees	19	20
Afford basics	18	19
Trade/Business income	13	14
Savings and loans	7	7
Group synergy	2	2
Other	5	5
Total	95	100

3.3.3 Participation in Tendering

Women were reported to be participating in the procurement processes of local government when compared to previous years.

I have been in the procurement department for nine years but women have now come up to compete for contracts. Women go for small jobs like routine road maintenance and market management.

(INTERVIEW WITH GULU DISTRICT PROCUREMENT OFFICER, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

In Gulu district, more women than men undertook the management of markets during the 2008/2009 financial year (see Table 7).

Table 7: Gulu District: 2008/2009 Market Management

No.	Market	Provider	Market Contract Value (UGX)
1	Acet Market	M	300,000
2	Labworomor	F	50,000
3	Palenga	M	142,000
4	Ongako Kal	F	50,000
5	Paicho	F	50,000
6	Coo-pee	M	150,000
7	Bobbi Ka (Apio)	F	150,000
8	Malaba	Company	200,000
9	Unyama	F	100,000
10	Awach	F	100,000
11	Opit	M	450,000
12	Lalogi	M	50,000
13	Ajulu	F	50,000
14	Awoo	M	50,000
15	Obiya	F	30,000
16	Laliya	F	450,000
	Total	[9 F, 6 M]	2,372,000

A similar situation exists within the routine maintenance of feeder roads in Gulu district, where more women than men have been contracted. Out of the 73 providers of road maintenance in 2008/2009, 53 (78 percent) were female and 19 (26 percent) male, while one was a company. This is an area formerly dominated by men before privatisation. The above figures confirm an upward trend in women's participation in procurement, albeit in areas which require minimal capital.

It was therefore noted that, although women now compete for contracts, few of them compete for big contracts compared to their male counterparts. Although women may be company shareholders in some cases, they are often overshadowed by men when it comes to pursuing and concluding business contracts. It was noted that women are engaged in small contract jobs because of the minimal capital they have at their disposal.²⁵

3.3.4 Organisation in Business/Women's Joint Venture

Poverty alleviation support among different agencies requires individuals to form groups as a prerequisite to access financial and material support (capital). Although women were in groups during the war, this phenomenon has been over-emphasised in the post-war period. Government programmes such as NAADS, NGOs, banks, etc., use groups as a conduit for support. As a result, almost all women have joined different groups of their preference. Such groups are engaged in commercial agriculture (such as upland rice, beans), poultry and livestock farming, among others.

3.3.5 Paid Employment

The civil service/formal sector has a reasonable number of women as employees. They are in most civil service departments, parastatals, NGOs, banks and factories, where they earn a salary. The armed forces, police, prisons and private security agencies have a sizable number of women employed in different ranks. This area was formerly a male-dominated domain. Some women are also employed in the household sector, hiring out their labour in gardens, as house workers or in contracts (such as labour-based contracts on roads).

It is very clear that the household segment of the post-war economy in northern Uganda is largely powered by women. They have scaled up what they traditionally undertook and taken on additional tasks. There is a clearly visible public economic presence of women, be it in markets, street vending, cross-border trade or feeder road construction. What remains to be revealed is how far this economic public presence translates into their empowerment in terms of personal power, as well as political participation. This also relates to the extent to which we can identify post-war economic opportunities and the ways in which women are taking advantage of those opportunities.

25 Assessment of other contracts was not possible since the contracts are awarded to companies and hence cannot be disaggregated by sex.

4. Post-war Economic Opportunities: Women Taking Advantage?

More than half of the women (56 percent), the majority of them from Gulu, acknowledge that there are new economic opportunities which have emerged in post-war northern Uganda. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 8: New Economic Opportunities

Opportunity	No.	%
Business/Trade	44	29
Agriculture	33	22
NGOs/CBOs	27	18
Financial	26	17
Government	9	6
Crafts and vocational	5	3
Road reconstruction	4	2
Social services	3	2
Other	2	1
Total	153	100

This section examines the new post-war economic opportunities and how women have taken advantage of them. There have been various recovery initiatives introduced by the government, international agencies, NGOs and the private sector, with a renewed interest in public private partnership.

4.1 Government Recovery Programmes

It is very important to note that government recovery programmes do not feature prominently in ordinary women's perceptions of and responses on livelihood possibilities. Throughout the study, it was clear that participants in FGDs and in-depth interviews had very little knowledge of and interaction with the government's specific recovery programmes for northern Uganda. Only key informants tended to hint towards these programmes. As indicated in Table 7 above, only 9 percent of the women included in the sample had an idea about government programmes as part of the new post-war opportunities.

The major flagship for government on post-war northern Uganda is the northern Uganda PRDP, launched in September 2007²⁶. The PRDP is a planning framework intended to: 1) strengthen the coordination of recovery interventions in the region; 2) enhance monitoring of nationally and internationally supported recovery programmes and activities in the north; 3) enhance resource mobilisation for affirmative interventions in northern Uganda. The overall goal of the PRDP is stability to regain and consolidate peace in the region and lay the foundations for the recovery and development of northern Uganda. The PRDP goal is to be realised through four core strategic objectives as shown in Box 1.²⁷

²⁶ GoU (2007). *Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) 2007-2010*. Office of the Prime Minister Northern Uganda. Rehabilitation: Kampala

²⁷ Ibid.

Box 1: PRDP Strategic Objectives

1. Consolidation of State Authority:
 1. Facilitation of Peace Agreements;
 2. Police Enhancement Programme;
 3. Prisons Enhancement Programme;
 4. Judicial Enhancement Programme;
 5. Rationalisation of Auxiliary Services Programme;
 6. Local Government Enhancement Programme.
2. Rebuilding of and Empowering Communities:
 - IDP Emergency Assistance Programme;
 - IDP Return/Resettlement Programme;
 - Community Empowerment;
 - Recovery programme (Health, Education, Water and Livelihood support programmes).
3. Revitalisation of the Northern Economy:
 - Production and Marketing Enhancement Programme (PMEP);
 - Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Urban Improvement Programme (IRP);
 - Land, Environment and Natural Resource Management programme (ERP).
 - Peace Building and Reconciliation:
 - Public Information Education and Communication (IEC)/Counselling Services Support Programme (CSP);
 - Mediation and Reconciliation Support Programme (MRSP) and Amnesty and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (ARP).
4. Peace Building and Reconciliation:
 1. Public Information Education and Communication (IEC)/Counselling Services Support Programme (CSP);
 2. Mediation and Reconciliation Support Programme (MRSP) and Amnesty and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (ARP).

The PRDP is mainly implemented through existing decentralised and centralised government structures, as well as CSOs/NGOs. In the first year of implementation, the PRDP was modified to focus on infrastructural development in the education, road, health and water sectors (mainly the construction of facilities).

Nevertheless, the PRDP is not a project but merely a policy framework. An appraisal of the PRDP concluded that 'PRDP was expected as a vehicle for additional resources given the specific challenges in reconstruction and reconciliation in a "post-war" setting, but to date [it has] only been a policy framework, not translated into any tangible action or benefits for the districts'²⁸. This also explains why the majority of people, women in particular, throughout the interviews and discussions, did not have the slightest idea about the PRDP, apart from civil servants. On the issues of gaps in the PRDP and of women's views seemingly not being taken into account, MP Beatrice Anywar was quoted as saying '[a] woman is now charged with more responsibilities than a man but there is little on the table to show she will get a fair share of the money'.²⁹

Many observers dealing with women's concerns note the gaps in the PRDP, the fact that it continues to focus on hardware aspects of reconstruction, such as the construction of roads, schools and health centres. Activists have also noted that the PRDP framework is not in line with accepted regional and international gender instruments, such as Uganda's gender policy, CEDAW, or the Beijing Platform of Action, which urge governments to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women.³⁰ In recognition of these gaps, several women's organisations

²⁸ NORAD (2008). *Appraisal of the Peace, Recovery and development Plan for Northern Uganda*. NORAD Report 25/2008 Discussion.

²⁹ 'RIGHTS-AFRICA: Uganda Women Seek Gender Recovery Plan in the North "Not just Roads"', *IPS Africa*, 26th September 2009. Available at <http://www.ips.org/africa/2009/09/rights-africa-uganda-women-seek-gender-recovery-plan/>

³⁰ Ibid.

in Uganda have formed a Women's Task Force (WTF) for a gender responsive PRDP³¹. These recommendations are specifically to address the silence of the PRDP on gender equality issues, women's specific needs and rights, and the lack of meaningful input from women (in communities in general) into its design and implementation. The report generally points out that a) decision-making planning, resource allocation and implementation must be grounded in women's realities; b) gender capacity of PRDP implementers must be enhanced; c) specific human and financial resources to address women's needs and gender equality issues should be committed.³² However, there was no indication in the field that the WTF recommendations were making any inroads into PRDP implementation.

Women key informants noted that women were not able to take advantage of economic opportunities provided under infrastructural development in the aforementioned sectors, mainly due to two main reasons. One is the lack of capacity to start up firms which could be able to compete favourably during the bidding process. The rigorous bidding process puts the majority of women at a disadvantage, since they cannot meet the requirements. All bidders are required to provide evidence of previous work, bank guarantees, performance bonds, security bids, insurance for the work and financial capacity for the work above UGX 200 million. Although these requirements are not upheld for work between UGX 15 and 30 million, the majority of the women do not have the financial capacity to undertake even "small" jobs. As a result, women continue to miss out on the economic opportunities which arise out of such programmes. The second reason is that such infrastructural development work requires heavy machinery and is capital intensive. As a result, there is little chance for women, who tend to be more responsible for labour-intensive work.

Women do not benefit from contracts because they do not have construction companies. They only supply food to the contractors.

(INTERVIEW WITH NGO FORUM CO-ORDINATOR, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

This NGO Forum Co-ordinator concluded by recommending affirmative action in contracts if women were to benefit from the economic opportunities provided under the PRDP in its current form.

Furthermore, women have not yet embraced the brick-making industry and, as such, cannot be able to supply bricks to construction sites. Women and their children have only monopolised the quarry works where they supply aggregate stones. However, given the nature of the process, where they use hand tools to crush the stones, the benefits are negligible and returns are very low. The activity is labour intensive and has grave health risks.

There are other agencies, such as the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), which provide free inputs and technology to farmer groups. The organisation targets women because they are serious in their implementation of programmes. Women are provided with seeds and appropriate technologies, as well as extension services. The farmers are also linked to the market.

On the whole, government programmes were not strongly felt in people's day-to-day life. Women, like most of the community members, were not aware of the PRDP programmes which were currently being undertaken. There is a disconnection between broad poverty alleviation programmes, e.g. PRDP and NUSAF, and communities.

31 ISIS-WICCE (2009). *Redefining Peace and development: Women's Recommendations for the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for North and North Eastern (PRDP)*. Kampala: ISIS-WICCE

32 Ibid., p.7.

4.2 Private Companies/Investments

There are remarkable new economic opportunities in investment provided by private companies, mainly in commercial agriculture. For instance, the Mukwano Group of Companies has opened up opportunities for communities to supply raw materials for vegetable oil seeds in Lira district. The company provides support to farmers to open up vast pieces of land, inputs such as seeds, pesticides, fertilisers and technical supervision. These are required to plant the agreed-upon species of sunflower, and the company provides a sure market for all the produce. Some women have taken advantage of this new economic opportunity by forming farmer groups through which the company provides support. It was confirmed that the majority of the farmer groups under this scheme were women. In the same vein, DUNAVAN, an international company, has opened up economic opportunities in the growing of cotton in Gulu district. Like Mukwano, DUNAVAN promotes cotton growing by providing inputs to farmers. Inputs include hoes, seeds, chemicals and the opening up of land in some cases. The company also supports farmer groups of which the majority are women. Mostly elderly women are said to have benefited under this company, possibly because the company visits the farmers' locations.

4.3 Banking Industry: Financial Opportunities

There is a strong financial sector registered in Uganda currently, which is replicated in the post-war northern region. There are 9 banks, 35 SACCOs in Gulu and 10 banks, 30 SACCOs in Lira district. This greatly contrasts with the pre-war period, when there were only 2 and 4 banks in Gulu and Lira respectively. Commercial banks and micro-finance institutions (MFI) as well as SACCOs constitute the largest repository for people's savings. They are also a source of credit for business ventures.

Many women were noted to have opened accounts in different banks and were the majority members in SACCOs (see tables 9 and 10). The majority of the women borrow from the SACCOs and are known to perform well in meeting loan repayment obligations. Financial institutions have helped women to sustain and expand their businesses through loans. A number of women have taken advantage of these financial institutions to start up, sustain and expand their business ventures. However, the reality is that the majority of women are not able to adequately utilise this expanded financial sector, due to the lack of collateral security, a prerequisite for securing bank loans in particular. Loan interest and repayment terms were also said to be prohibitive.

SACCOS are not new on the economic scene, being a replica of co-operatives which had previously collapsed. The government has revived SACCOS as a vehicle through which prosperity for all/poverty alleviation funds are being channelled. Any prospective beneficiary or anyone interested in accessing government funding has to be a member of a registered SACCO. Besides government funds, SACCO members accumulate funds in terms of shares bought. These funds form part of the loan portfolio, which are loaned out on interest among SACCO members.

A review of SACCO membership in Lira and Gulu districts shows that women dominate SACCOs, compared to men. Women are reported to be active members in terms of borrowing and repaying loans. SACCOs have become the major source of loans, due to the fact that women lack the collateral security required by banks in order to secure a loan.

Table 9:³³ Gulu District SACCO Membership – September 2009³⁴

Sub-county	SACCO Name	£	Σ	Τ	C/P	V/C	Treasurer	Manager	Sec
1. Paicho	1. Para-Pul	212	202	414	M	F	M	M	M
	2. Paicho	54	36	90	M	M	F		M
2. Layibi	3. Gulu Municipal	302	452	754	F	M	F	M	M
	4. Konye Kenwu								
3. Bobi	5. Pi-Lwak	329	174	503	F	M	M	M	F
	6. Palenga Community	44	55	99	M	M	F	M	M
	7. Bobi Community	23	58	81	M	M	F	M	M
4. Lakwana	4. Atek Ki Lwak	121	234	355	M	M	M	F	M
5. Bardege	5. Akwaya	2089	939	3028	M	F	M	M	M
	6. Kasubi Bardege	164	156	320	M	M	F	M	M
	11. Lacor Hosp workers	420	218	638	M	F	M		M
	12. Rubanga Tek	37	67	104	M	F	M		M
	13. Gulu Catechist Farmers	49	153	202	M	M	M		M
6. Laroo	14. Voluntary	82	63	145	M	F	F	F	F
	15. Laroo	40	25	65	M	M	M		M
	16. Gulu Elder League	128	178	306	M	M	M	M	M
7. Ongako	17. Ongako	348	178	526	M	M	M	M	M
	18. Can pe Ciko	52	10	62	F	F	F	M	M
	19. Gulu Kwo Tek	43	61	104	M	M	M	F	M
8. Bungatira	20. Bungatira Farmers								
	21. Gulu Rural								
9. Lalogi	23. Lalogi Sub-county	13	24	37	M	M	F		M
	24. Lalogi Farmers								
10. Pece Division	25. Gulu Village	148	153	301	F	M	F	M	M
	26. Pece Division	68	65	133	M	M	F		M
	27. Gulu SACCO								
	28. Acholi	123	79	202	M	F	F	M	M
11. Patiko	29. Ajulu								
	30. Oceco Got Mola	41	29	70	M	M	F		M
12. Palaro	31. Palaro	37	52	89	M	M	M	M	M
13. Awach	32. Awach	15	23	38	M	M	M		M
14. Odek	33. Odek								
15. Koro	34. Koro community								
	35. Akwo ki Lweta	53	28	81	M	F	M		M
	TOTAL	5035	3712	8,747					

33 Key: C/P = Chairperson, VC = Vice- Chairperson, Sec= Secretary, M= Male, F= Female, blank implies unavailable information/data. This also applies to Table 10.

34 UCSCU (2009). *Gulu Regional Office Records*. Gulu.

Table 10: Lira District SACCO Membership – September 2009³⁵

Sub-county	SACCO Name	F	M	T	C/P	V/C	Treasurer	Manager	Sec
1. Amach	1. Amach Farmers	33	75	108	M	M	F	M	M
2. Amugu	2. Amugu	16	43	59	M	M	M		F
3. Olilim	3. Olilim	54	90	144	M	M	F		M
	4. Ipito Gweno	304	263	567	M	M	F	F	M
4. Aromo	5. Aromo	19	103	122	M	M	M	M	M
	6. Baar Rural development	139	309	448	M	F	M	M	M
	7. Baar Apwo	60	50	110	M	F	F	F	M
5. Ojwina Division	8. Lira Diocese	418	261	679	M	M	M	M	M
	9. Lira District Women	151		151	F	F	F	M	F
6. Aloï	10. Aloï	87	78	165	M	F	M	M	M
7. Ogur	11. Ogur	67	26	93	M	F	F	M	F
8. Ojwina Division	12. Oribcing Women group	713	1171	1884	F	M	F	F	M
9. Amach S/C	13. Amach S/c SACCO	72	191	263	M	M	F	M	M
10. Railway Division	14. Railway Div	2	3	5	M	M	M		M
11. Lira	15. Lira SACCO	101	70	171					
12. Adyel Div	16. Starch Factory	49	89	138	M	M	M	M	M
	17. Lira Female Teachers	221	18	239	F	F	F	M	F
13. Central	18. Lira Central	128	180	308	M	M	M	F	M
	19. Lira District Elders	256	47	303	M	M	M	F	M
14. Ojwina	20. Ojwina pur kede kwoch	206	32	238	F	F	F	F	F
	21. Lira District								
	22. Hunger Alert								
	23. Odokomit	158	143	301	M	M	F	M	M
	24. Otim ikomwa								
	25. Bar-Ogole	75	185	260					
15. Orum	26. Orum			0	M	M	F		M
16. Abako	27. Abako	60	140	200	M	F	M		M
17. Apala	28. Apala	32	86	118	M	M	F		M
18. Adwari	29. Adwari	60	100	160					
19. Adekokwok	30. Yelle Atek	10	40	50	F	F	F	M	F
	TOTAL	3,491	3,793	7,284					

³⁵ Ibid.

In line with the SACCOs, women have formed village saving groups/schemes. This is commonly termed as “BOLECUP”. This is where group members deposit any agreed-upon amount of money per a specified time interval in a tin or box. They save any amount of cash, even as low as UGX200. Once the funds have accumulated, the cash is given to one group member for a small fee. The cash is usually injected into their respective businesses. In other instances, the group uses the savings to start a group business. Village saving groups have become common where many women were reported to subscribe to the groups.

4.4 Growth in Local Trade

As already discussed, the level of commercialisation in post-war northern Uganda has greatly expanded. The scope of tradable items has expanded to include all foodstuffs which are mostly sold by women. The nature of trading has taken on new trends, where women operate in groups (joint ventures). These help the women to enjoy economies of scale, reduce operating costs, bid for contracts and attract joint ventures with companies, as well as secure loans.

Fishmongering in Gulu is monopolised by women. There are three women groups engaged in fishmongering and it is difficult to penetrate this business now.

(INTERVIEW WITH KI, GULU COMMERCIAL OFFICER, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

The market has greatly expanded from local to external markets, extending to other districts as well as neighbouring countries for example, South Sudan.

Today our 40 members are going to Tanzania to check for business opportunities. Three women are going to India for entrepreneurship training.

(INTERVIEW WITH KI, TREASURER GULU CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

4.5 NGOs/Civil Society

The post-war period in northern Uganda has seen many NGOs, both national and international, bringing services to the area. International humanitarian and development agencies, like WFP, UNICEF, World Vision, CARE International and FAO, brought different services and programmes which have created new economic opportunities. Agencies such as FAO and WFP have provided inputs such as seeds, ox ploughs, goats and chicken to women's groups for commercial agriculture. More women's groups are currently engaged in upland rice growing and maize, and agencies provide markets for the produce. WFP buys the produce for its relief services. These agencies have led to the further stimulation of markets by providing inputs such as seeds for group planting and livestock, such as goats, to improve household incomes.

Through their relief and humanitarian services, international NGOs' activities have led to trading in related products from the wartime period to today. They have stimulated commercial agriculture in produce (rice, maize, etc.), of which women have taken advantage. Some NGOs have introduced the “voucher for work” scheme, where payment is through the issuing of vouchers. Instead of paying cash, one is given a voucher. UNICEF and FAO, through the Agency for Cooperation and Technical Development (ACTED), have constructed various schools under this scheme. The schools are required to hold a livestock fair where the voucher beneficiaries can purchase livestock. Women have also participated in the construction of classroom buildings.

Case of Ms Auci

Ms Auci worked for 22 days and received a voucher worth UGX 88,000. She used the vouchers to acquire four goats during a livestock fair.³⁶

Picture 1: A Voucher System Beneficiary



MORE REWARDING: Ms Auci and the goats she got through the Voucher For Work project. Most residents now prefer being paid in vouchers rather than cash. Photo by Hudson Apunyo

A special report on the voucher system further reveals experiences of economic empowerment through the voucher system for other women. They intend to pay fees once the goats breed or sell them at a profit at a later stage. The report further reveals cooperation among women who are combining vouchers to jointly purchase oxen and cows. Joint ventures seem to have taken centre stage to enable women to compete favourably. The voucher system enables women to save, unlike payment in cash, where one is likely to spend the funds on daily needs.

On the question of whether women are taking advantage of post-war economic opportunities, only 49 of the 200 women interviewed answered in the affirmative that they directly took part in post-war economic opportunities. This response is partly due to the general understanding of post-war opportunities, which is often limited to programmes originating outside of the region, i.e. from the government, NGOs and agencies. This then made the situation appear devoid of clear economic opportunities during the wartime period. However, talking to a number of people, it was clear that there was some level of optimism in the post-war period. Post-war opportunities include boosted production and consumer capacity, as well as the expanding services and construction sectors.

36 'MORE REWARDING', *Daily Monitor*, 22nd October 2007.

Case of Omonya - Lira

Before the war, life was much better, we had everything; food, cattle, and animals like goats. Life was easy but after and during the war, we lost most of these things; cows, our homes even the little food stocks we had got were depleted in the camps so we got pushed to the very edge of survival.

Now that we are back home, life is worse than before for me, I have no animals, I can't farm my land as before, no food with poor rains that destroyed the available crops...its more hard now, nothing has changed about my living conditions after the war, instead it has worsened. What we have lost can't be rebuilt or regained now at my age, I can't think of buying a cow or any animal for myself.

For me, there is nothing I am taking advantage of from post-war opportunities, but some women, especially young women, have taken advantage of these opportunities. Many women are growing out of the hut, they now live a more decent life than before, some now run small businesses, own cattle or animals, have better houses – iron-roofed houses that they did not have before the war. Or homes, something they didn't have before. They dress more smartly and are cleaner compared to the past.

Some women in the area operate small restaurants now which give them some money. The only problem is the bad road network in the sub-county. Vehicles could be coming to get food produce from the homes of people but the roads are so bad for cars to come down to the grassroots. Some women who have access to the opportunities are sending their children to school, girls especially are being educated a lot.

I face many problems as an old, elderly widow. I have inadequate food at home yet I have orphans to look after. I am being threatened with eviction from my land, which is my major source of livelihood. I lack planting materials and seeds. The elderly are excluded from some development programmes. Educating the orphans is very expensive for me and I am not able to provide them with essentials. I therefore suggest that the elderly also be included in development programmes and that the government stops the National Forestry Authority (NFA) from evicting us. Provide us with fast-yielding drought resistant crops to deal with the changing weather patterns.

Case of Arach - Gulu

I am a university graduate aged 28 years, single with 2 children. War forced us to leave the village while in 2nd year in a secondary school and we went to Gulu town. My uncle continued to pay fees for me and I finished the 6th year of secondary school amidst difficulties and hardships. I used to work in people's gardens for money on weekends and holidays to enable me buy to scholastic materials and other requirements. Determined to get a university education, I approached the woman MP who secured me a job in a hardware shop as a shop attendant/sales woman. I passed and went to a national Teachers' College but would work in the shop during the holidays and weekends. After finishing the diploma course, I joined university where the company agreed to pay half of my tuition.

Right now I am still at the hardware shop. Working here has helped me a lot. I bought two plots of land in Pader using the salary I get and on one plot I have constructed a house which am renting out. I have created many friends among the customers who come to buy their building materials from here. I am so engaged in the shop I have not explored other economic opportunities out there unless I leave here. Other women are in groups doing a lot of business and have accessed loans to boost their businesses.

My life has changed greatly after the end of the war. Our operation used to be limited but now I can go to the fields, supervise work like when the company has been contracted to build somewhere, and road construction. I also go out to supervise and I get allowances which I used not to get during the war. In fact generally I could say this war has acted as an eye-opener to very many people, especially women, in that they have started participating in economic activities actively, unlike before here in Acholi. Women used not to own property. It was even unheard of to find women owning land or animals while the husband was around. All this has changed.

Arach above demonstrates the relatively fluid terrain of post-war northern Uganda. On the one hand she argues that she has not taken advantage of post-war opportunities and yet, on the other hand, she demonstrates clearly her benefits as a person and as a woman. Omonya, an elderly woman, also acknowledges available opportunities, though she highlights the fact that the elderly are not benefiting as much.

Women are surely taking advantage of the peace dividends to craft an identity of their own. From all the field discussions, it is very evident that there are many post-war economic opportunities and that women are involved in a lot of initiatives to better their lives, although there are many difficulties. The war, despite its very negative impact, has also had significant positive changes in the lives of people. For example, new developments in the community such as trade have gone up and communities, especially women from rural areas, have learned new survival skills.

The war was a blessing in disguise; our women now know how to fend for themselves without relying on their spouses.

(INTERVIEW WITH KI, LIRA, NOVEMBER 2009)

5. Women's Post-war Economic Participation, Empowerment and Political Participation

War had a profound impact on the household economy and power relations. Men and women were displaced and abducted, with both undergoing untold suffering. However, in terms of dislocation, there seemed to be more impact on men, making them more or less absent from the household, both in physical and symbolic terms. This has meant that women have become central and clearly visible in the household economy. This section attempts to analyse the linkage between this economic visibility of women and their levels of empowerment, especially the impact on women's political participation.

5.1 Women's Economic Activities *vis-à-vis* Household Gender Relations

As mentioned previously, the war situation led to a shift in household power relations/dynamics. Interactions with the community revealed that the burden of a family's survival was currently shouldered by women. Nearly all women are engaged in an activity which generates income. Some women have consequently become sole providers within the family.

Table 11: Family Decisions in Which Women are Involved

Decisions	No.	%
Children's welfare	70	32
All	52	24
Family welfare	44	20
Income, expenses and business	19	9
Farming	15	7
None	14	6
Other	6	2
Total	220	100

About one quarter of the women participate in all family decisions, particularly widows, women in monogamous marriages, and those separated or divorced (in descending order). About one half of women participate in family and children's welfare, although women in polygamous relationships play a greater role in deciding issues of family and children's welfare. Another 9 percent, constituting mostly women in monogamous relationships, said they were involved in deciding on income, expenses and business, while 7 percent participated in farming decisions. Very few women (6 percent) said they did not take part in family decisions, almost all of these from those in monogamous marriages. This shows a high involvement of women in family decision making. The following table highlights additional decision-making aspects in which women take part.

Table 12: Percent of Responses to Aspects of Women's Family Decision Making

Question	Percentage				
	Yes	No	N/A	Other	No.
1 Do you decide on the purpose for which family land is used?	62	24	10	3	197
2 Are you involved in deciding on the sale or purchase of animals in your family?	54	15	29	2	196
3 Are you involved in deciding which school a child in your family should go to?	81	7	11	2	196
4 Do you take part in deciding the selling of the family harvest?	65	6	29	1	192
5 Do you decide on how to use money earned from the sale of the family harvest?	57	11	29	3	195
6 When going away from your home, do you get permission from your husband or spouse?	63	14	23	0	193

As mentioned previously, the expanded engagement of women in income-generating activities was predicated on the desperate situation to survive during the war. The further scaling up of women's cash-related activities with the relative return to peace is a continuation of new roles. These have now taken a new turn, where women tend to shoulder more responsibilities. In the post-war situation, they need to ensure family welfare and family development in the face of relatively diminished male contribution in real and symbolic terms.

Informants argued that, in terms of economic power, women had made a tremendous change in the management of household affairs. This has impacted on women's positions in terms of decision making and the ownership/control of resources. Women have now started making decisions more than ever before, consequently becoming key players in the post-war economy. Women were reported to be increasingly participating in decision making and, in some cases, taking decisions alone. Although the general perception is that women in urban areas have relatively more power in the household compared to their counterparts in rural areas, actual responses seem to challenge this rural-urban difference. This is possibly because almost all women were in camps during the war and, as such, marked urban/rural differences may have been blurred. This was attributed to the fact that these women have more financial capacity than before and, in some cases, more than their husbands. Compared to married women, single women and widows have full control in terms of decision making and property ownership. Arising out of their financial capacity, they take decisions without any consultation with the extended family. Given that this category of women forms a sizeable number in northern Uganda currently, this impacts on the general picture of women's power in the community. The situation is, therefore, clearly one of relative empowerment of women, both at the individual and collective level.

It was acknowledged that some of the key decisions women were able to make, in which they could participate or to which they could relate were, for example, how to manage family property such as livestock, which schools to which the children should go and how to spend the family income. Women take decisions on economic activity in which they should participate, whether within the country or outside of the country (e.g. South Sudan/Juba market). Women are increasingly owning property, using funds acquired from their economic activities. Some women were reported to have built their own houses.

Women take care of the family needs. They can afford to pay for their children in good schools both in primary and secondary - mind you, even the women in the villages here.

(INTERVIEW WITH A MP, ASWA COUNTY, NOVEMBER 2009)

Although some informants argued that urban women had more freedom to participate in businesses and meetings, others noted that rural women had equal freedom. It was reported that they were at liberty to attend meetings, they knew their rights to participate in economic activities and politics, and they attended workshops/training held by different agencies such as NGOs. Most NGOs have been targeting women and have actually increased women's awareness of their rights.

5.2 Beyond the Household: Women's Economic Leverage and Political Participation

The limitation of this study is that no general election has taken place since the return of relative peace. Therefore, it is not possible to make a clear linkage between women's economic visibility and their occupation of key leadership positions.

However, a scan through different spaces/programmes shows that women are represented more than ever before. Women's levels of awareness are high in terms of their rights to participate in political and economic activities. It was interesting to note the ease with which women employed the language of rights in both urban and rural areas. There is more exposure to this language among women, arising out of expanded economic activity, the possibilities for representation, and the ability to govern. Increased exposure could also be attributed to the role of rights-based NGOs, which have engaged women in various training programmes on their rights. Accordingly, a lot of sensitisation took place during the war when people were concentrated in camps. In this case, women seem to have benefited most in that they are now able to use the knowledge to improve on their situation and position.³⁷

At the community level we were told that women were increasingly selected to be part of various decision-making spaces and community programmes.

There is a big impact. Once you are empowered with resources, you are more bold and confident to take up leadership positions.

(INTERVIEW WITH A COMMERCIAL OFFICER, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

About half of the women surveyed, with a slight majority from Gulu district, indicated that they were able to influence public opinion and community members. However, very few women reported holding any position in local and central government beyond the mandatory one third in local councils (LCs) as provided for in the Local Government Act of 1997. Even then, it was reported that there were many women in leadership positions at the community level. Below is a table showing the general views of women regarding their participation in public spaces.

37 View clarified during the validation exercise in Gulu, April 2010.

Table 13: Aspects of Women's Public Influence and Decision Making

Question		Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	Are you a member of any group or organisation?	42	58
2	Are you able to influence opinions of other community members?	45	55
3	Have you made any financial contributions to a public or community project over the last 12 months?	22	78
4	Do you hold any position in the local (LC 3 sub-county level or LC 5 district level) or central government?	3	97
5	Have you ever contributed to the election campaign of any candidate?	14	86
6	Have you ever been a campaign agent for a candidate?	13	87
7	Did you vote in the 2006 general elections (presidential, parliamentary or local)?	79	21
8	Do you plan to vote in the coming general elections (presidential, parliamentary or local) in 2011?	92	8
9	Have you ever participated in presenting any petition (written or verbal) to any authority?	5	95
10	Have you ever participated in any Government/LRA peace initiatives?	8	92

It is important to note that an overwhelming majority of women voted in the 2006 elections (79 percent), while 92 percent said they would vote in the 2011 general elections. Apart from voting, women also act as campaign agents. However, probably because of low incomes, very few reported providing financial support to candidates. Nevertheless, would women vote for women for specific positions if they contested? The following table shows responses for selected positions.

Table 14: Willingness to Vote For Women by District

District	Lira				Gulu			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
President of Uganda	64	66	33	34	66	70	29	30
Constituency Open Seat MP	85	92	7	8	73	82	16	18
LC V Chairperson	64	72	25	28	62	69	28	31
LC III Chairperson	63	70	27	30	65	71	26	29
LC I Chairperson	68	75	23	25	69	74	24	26

On average, about seven out of every ten of the women said they would vote for a woman for the positions of president, constituency MP or chairpersons of LCV, LC III and LC I, if they were to contest. On account of the belief that the position of MP is “easier”, there was more reported willingness to vote for a woman for a MP position than for all the other positions named in Table 14. Proportionately, more women in Lira (92 percent) than Gulu (82 percent) said they would vote for a female constituency MP. This is probably because Lira has a history of voting for women for the Lira municipality seat. Lira was also more positive about voting for a woman for the LCV chair than Gulu.

The reasons advanced for voting for women for various positions included women being seen as capable of holding those positions for reasons of gender equality, such that women take part and are represented in public spaces; the argument that women are better representatives of women's needs and interests; women have good leadership skills which men politicians may not possess. On the other hand, the few women who argued that they would not vote for women for

the named positions justified their positions by arguing that politics in Uganda, especially at the presidential level, was violent and too militarised for women to manage. They also stated that men were most suited for such positions “naturally” and contended that, even if they voted for a woman, she would never go through because of election rigging or that, even if a woman was voted for, she would not succeed in her career and hence their effort would be futile and wasted. These seem to be rooted in the dominant patriarchal ideology that men should be the rulers. It should be noted that, even when 70 percent of the women said they would vote for women, this has and may not be translated into practice. In reality there seems to be willingness to vote for women, but the actual voting for men in these positions persists partly because of patriarchal attitudes and also because of the very fact that very few women occupy high-level positions³⁸.

For a number of key informants, women were propelled by economic power to compete for leadership positions, participating in meetings and talking freely. In talking about possibilities, Lamuru from Lira exemplifies this connection between economic opportunities and political fortunes.

Case of Lamuru - Lira

I am a diploma holder aged 38. I am currently teaching in a primary school. I dropped out [of education] in primary 5 due to pregnancy and had twins. My auntie stayed with the one-year-old babies and sent me back to School where I sat the UCE [Uganda Certificate of Education examinations] in 1996. I would help my aunt to brew and sell alcohol, after which I went back for a diploma.

I started rearing chickens as I waited for a job posting. My husband provided me with capital. Unfortunately my husband was later killed by rebels. I started teaching while caring for my four children. Currently I have a third husband with whom I have two more children. I do farming in addition to teaching and chicken rearing.

I am a member of a group which sells natural medicines and food supplements for a commission. I was an agent for one candidate in the previous elections; however, the candidate withdrew at the last moment. I love politics and campaigns and hope one day to campaign myself for a government position.

There are a lot of economic opportunities for women which they learned from NGOs, for instance rearing chickens, keeping cattle, bead work, and so on. The post-war situation has changed to some extent because a lot of hotels have come up in town and there are a lot of clients demanding chicken, which is good for me because I always have a market. Economic participation has made a difference in my life because now I earn a lot of money, about UGX500,000 a month from my salary and business, and it has given me confidence that I can do more and maybe with time I will stand for a government post, leave teaching and be able to build a big permanent house for family. My major problem is the high cost of feed.

Furthermore there is an aspect of political apprenticeship which could be created in the peacebuilding and reconstruction period.³⁹ There is a lot of public activity which did not exist in the pre-war period. There is also a requirement to be in a group to benefit from different development programmes such as NAADS or from organisations like FAO. Once in a group, women sometimes ascend to upper-level or even leadership positions within those groups. These public activities can form training spaces for women in leadership. Although the political impact of these spaces should not be exaggerated, they form an opening for the otherwise airtight recruitment system of leadership which mostly favours men.⁴⁰

38 J. Ahikire & A. Madanda (2009). 'From No Party to Multiparty Competition: Analysing Women's Candidature in Uganda's 2006 National Elections', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3 (11): 460-475.

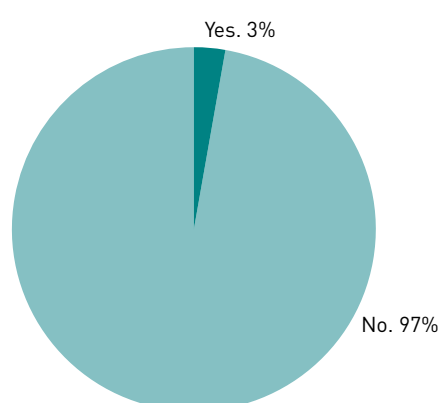
39 A. M. Goetz (2003). 'The Problem with Patronage: Constraints on Women's Political Effectiveness in Uganda' in A.M. Goetz & S. Hassim (eds.) (2003). *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*, London: Zed Books.

40 J. Ahikire (2007). *Localised or Localising Democracy: Gender and the Politics of Decentralisation in Contemporary Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers

Table 15: Lira and Gulu District SACCOs Leadership – Sep 2009

District	Chairperson		Vice Chair person		Treasurer		Secretary	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gulu	22	4	14	8	10	12	20	2
Lira	19	5	15	9	10	14	18	6

Although we saw increased possibilities at the community level, the broader picture which persists is that, as women struggle for family survival and development almost single handedly, men continue to recreate political power in a way in which it maintains its masculine character, even in the face of greater female economic visibility. In this way, patriarchy is recreating itself to absorb the new identities of men who may or may not contribute to household welfare, but still remain the primary custodians of political power. Women are severely underrepresented. Currently the representation of women in high-level positions seems to be dictated by the mandatory one third. The figure below shows the proportion of women who hold an elected or appointed government position in the sample surveyed.

Figure 2: Women Respondents and Government Positions

The survey findings indicated that only 3 percent of respondents said they had a position in government, most of them as local government councillors and one as a government employee. The majority, 97 percent, did not hold any position in government.

The correlation of political power with income exposes interesting dimensions. 40 percent of the women who said they were unable to influence opinions of other community members fell in the lowest income category (those who earn less than UGX 60,000 per month). 97 percent of the women in the lowest income group said they did not hold any position in the local or central government, implying that low income is strongly associated with exclusion from government positions. Most of the women with government positions reported a monthly income above UGX 180,000, although two councillors reported an income of below UGX 60,000, falling in the lowest income bracket. Furthermore, forty percent of the women who had ever offered financial support in electoral politics reported incomes above UGX 360,000. The two women who reported the highest monthly incomes of UGX 1,650,000 and UGX 3,000,000 respectively stated that they were able to influence other community members, although neither of them held a position in government.

At the general level, most women participated in electoral processes, but their role was mostly as campaign managers or they offered what they described as moral support. Women who took part in elections as campaign managers cut across all income groups meaning that, with the exception of voting, campaigning for a candidate was probably one of the most inclusive roles which women played across the board.

Therefore, income levels have an influence on broader political participation. Although not all those with high incomes are able or interested in standing for public office, they still do influence decisions at various levels. Women with low income levels do not participate and also tend to be limited to supporting roles.

In terms of future possibilities for women's political participation, this was fairly unclear as respondents oscillated between the two positions of increased possibilities and the reality of persistent male dominance in politics.

There are women who are preparing to contest in the 2011 elections. There are women who are preparing to contest for mayorship and chairperson of LCV.

(INTERVIEW WITH CDO, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

Society in northern Uganda is still patriarchal and as a result women's representation in competitive offices is still lagging behind. For example we do not have any LCIII woman chairperson.

(EXPRESSED DURING FGD, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

Women's influence at community and state levels seems not to be in tandem with their great presence in household sustenance. There is strong presence of women in group formation and they also seem to have a relatively strong voice at the community level. The willingness to vote shows that they are adequately politically aware. However, other indicators show that influence at broader levels is limited. This calls for targeted intervention and very intense advocacy and mobilisation to realise women's potential and enhance their political participation.

5.3 Accounting for Women's Limited Political Power

In trying to unravel this contradiction, we posed a candid question: where do women put their money? How come the translation of economic power into political power is somehow constrained? Critical analysis indicates that the majority of women are firmly rooted in basic family survival and that the money they make is not likely to be invested in building political influence.

Women looked at these challenges in terms of their livelihood and survival options. It was rather hard to push them to relate their economic efforts and how they use their relative economic leverage benefits to impact on broader political participation. It took a lot of probing and interpretation to develop insights into the connection between economic participation and political participation. The limiting factors identified are outlined below:

i) Women's Workloads: Old and New Burdens

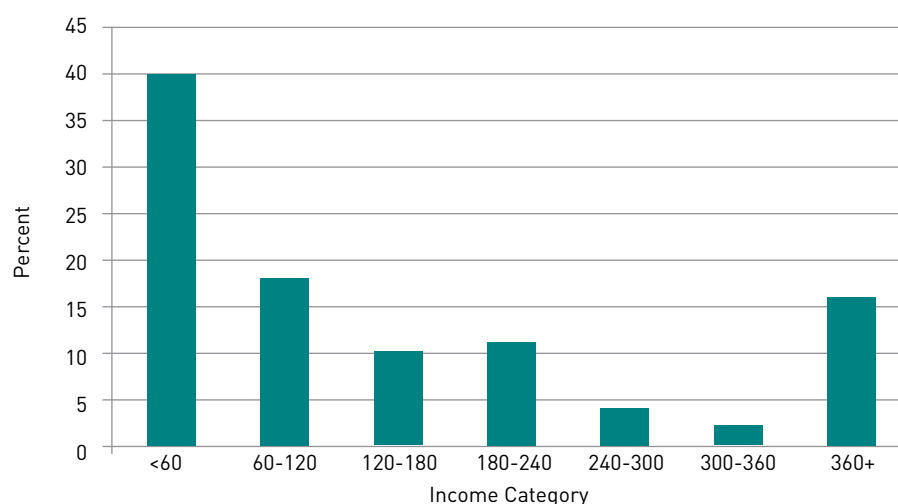
The majority of women respondents pointed out the issue of heavy workloads. The household economy weighed heavily on the shoulders of women. Women have indeed added new roles to old ones. This in itself limits political ambitions and aspirations. There is only little room to manoeuvre. Thus, participation in the community is largely in spaces where women expect to further improve the struggle for family survival.

Because of this basic livelihood focus, women are specifically over-preoccupied with the family and children's welfare, especially after many years of lost opportunity. Accordingly, when it comes to election to public office, there is a feeling in the community that it is not proper to elect already over-burdened women to political positions. Therefore, this very practical dilemma is likely to limit women's broader political participation.

ii) Big Efforts, Small Returns

Women in post-war northern Uganda are visibly working hard. However, the level of business is too small to make a breakthrough. It is not surprising that 53 percent reported an income below UGX 100,000, 75 percent below UGX 200,000 and 82 percent below UGX 300,000 a month. Only about 2.5 percent reported an income of over UGX 900,000 per month, all of them in urban areas. This resonates with O'Laughlin's analogy of "a bigger piece of a very small pie", which she places in relation to resource allocation and poverty reduction in Africa⁴¹. Figure 3 below illustrates the point on small returns, where the majority of respondents exist purely on subsistence level.

Figure 3: Income Category in Ugandan Shillings (000s)



Forty percent of women reported a monthly income below UGX 60,000 (US\$ 30). About 16 percent earned UGX 360,000 (US\$ 180) and above. Most of the women who reported the highest income were in the urban areas of Ojwina division in Lira and Berdege division in Gulu. Most of these women were mostly engaged in business as their primary occupation, but a few were in formal or some form of paid employment. Most of the women who reported the lowest incomes were in the rural sub-counties of Apala in Lira and Bungatira in Gulu district. The returns on women's expanded efforts in the post-war period are too small to make a breakthrough. Therefore, they are not able to make substantial inroads into the political space.

The point here is not to deride the great role women are playing in the post-war economy (particularly at household level), but rather to underline the manner in which women's economic visibility has expanded in a context of limited options for big breakthroughs. High levels of poverty in northern Uganda (the poorest in the country) make it hard to find resources for engagement in political and public activities. In addition, the majority of women are hampered by the fact that they are facing this poverty more or less single handedly, where the burden of ensuring household sustenance lies squarely on their shoulders.

iii) Limits of Collectivisation in Reconstruction

In all emancipation projects one will find the emphasis on the role of collective action and the notion of strength in numbers. In current development discourse, women are especially urged to form groups in order to be helped. Critical analysis indicates that there is a contradiction to be unravelled in this practice. Groups and action in groups are commendable, but only in a context where there is self-organisation and the ability to pursue transformational politics. Imposed collectivisation puts a strain on women's participation, further aggravating their time poverty.

41 B. O'Laughlin (2007). 'A Bigger Piece of A Very Small Pie: Intrahousehold Resource Allocation and Poverty Reduction in Africa', *Development and Change*, 38 (1).

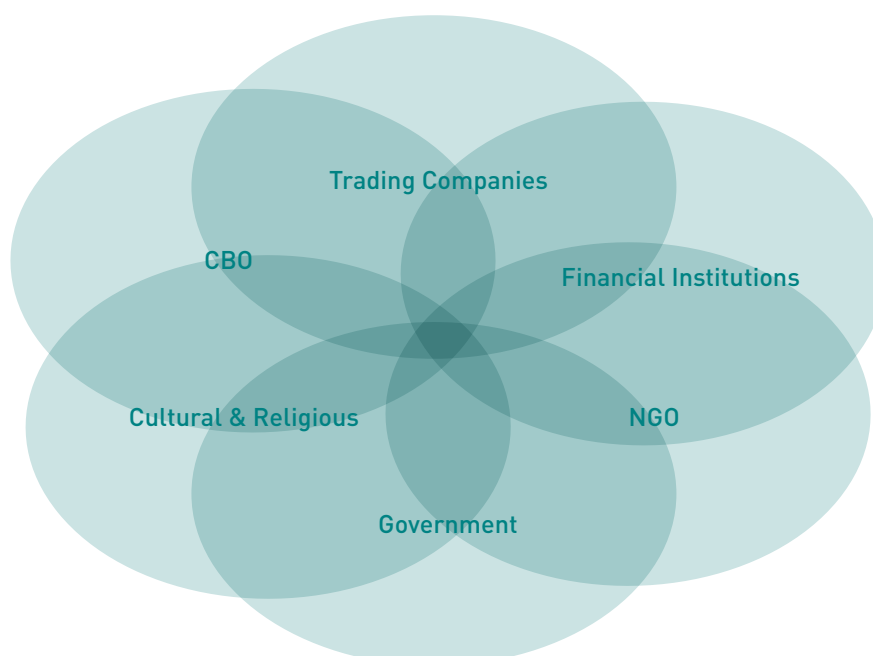
Nearly all development agencies, government programmes and CSOs require women to belong to groups as a precondition to access services such as loans, farm inputs or grants. Different actors come with various demands as preconditions for groups to be supported (see box below).

Box 2: Selection Requirements for Groups (presented differently by different agencies)

- Geographical coverage, i.e. group to function in a specific geographical space
- Minimum/maximum no. of members
- Bank accounts
- Registration at sub-county or district level
- Various forms to fill in
- Specific category of group, e.g. widows
- Specific services
- Collateral security
- Members' savings, co-financing

Different preconditions place women at a crossroads, as they spend most of their time trying to fulfil the requirements. For example, with the government-supported Community Driven Development programme (CDD), an existing group is required to open a new bank account, even if they have one already. Another example is that a widow, if already in a group of widows, will be required to join or form another group to participate in a programme which requires a specific geographical location. The figure below attempts to visualise the sources of demands on women to group and how this impacts on individuals.

Figure 4: Mapping Out Women's Burdens of Participation in Reconstruction: Sources of Demands for Grouping



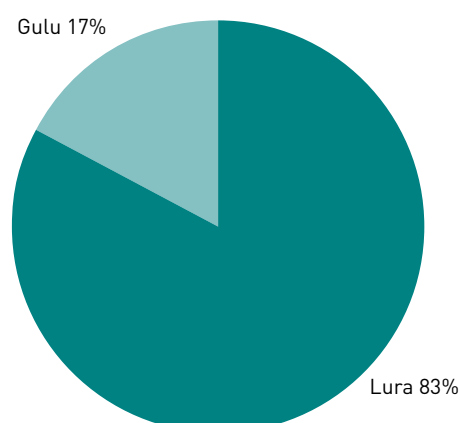
As women struggle to stay afloat, they are bombarded with the many demands of different organisations and agencies in order to access assistance. Women feel compelled to belong to a group in order to receive help. As a result they are forced to form and join multiple groups leading

to what we have termed as “over-participation” or the “burden of participation.”⁴² Through discussions and in-depth interviews it became apparent that demand for grouping was more common with interventions targeting women, to the extent that guilt was bestowed on those not in groups.

iv) The Role of Negative Masculinities and Reshaped Patriarchy

As seen from the analysis, traditional masculinities, hinged on men's ability to protect, provide and rule, have been destabilised. One of the clear outcomes of this loss is an increase in violence. Gender-based violence was noted as a deterrent to women's political participation. Although some respondents indicated that the level of gender-based violence had gone down, the larger majority indicated that violence still persisted and that it impeded women's political participation.

Figure 5: Reported VAW by district



Clearly, violence seems to be the only weapon with which men are left as a result of the war. Violence seems to be one of the mechanisms through which patriarchy is reinventing itself to subordinate women in a situation where the majority of men have clearly lost their dominant position in the household economy. This led us to analyse challenges named by women as illustrated in Table 16.

Table 16: Challenges Facing Women in Families

Challenge	No.	% of responses
Lack of school fees	25	11
Food	40	18
VAW	42	19
Ill health/Death	19	8
Poverty	50	23
Overwhelming responsibility	31	14
None	10	5
Other	4	2
Total	221	100

⁴² The survey showed that 42 percent of the women respondents belonged to groups. Analysis showed that the response to this question very much depended on the understanding of the respondent's understanding of what was at stake, whether or not it was advantageous to say that one belonged to a group and the related chances of receiving help. However the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions brought out this issue clearly, in that the demands to form groups were excessive. These demands also carry undertones of free money (real or imagined) as handouts and, in this way, women's entrepreneurship capacities were undermined.

An analysis of the challenges mentioned by women also indicated that, apart from the generally high levels of poverty, lack of food, and school fees, the single most important gender-related challenges mentioned were violence and overwhelming responsibility. The unique combination of overwhelming responsibility and violence creates a large barrier for a number of women to be legitimate political actors. Such a combination deters even those who do not actually experience violence in real terms. It acts as a symbolic deterrent, whether women are actually experiencing violence directly or not.

Atim (not her real name) from Lira exemplifies the direct relationship between violence and political participation:

Case of Atim - Lira

While in the camp, my husband embarked on heavy drinking and he used to be beaten by the soldiers. He got another wife and abandoned me with the children. To date he has become a headache to me. He takes decisions and sells cattle and food stock without consulting me.

I used to be a public figure but I cannot take part in any community work because of constant embarrassment by my husband. He can stage a fight on me anytime and use abusive language in public. One time I was taking a bath and he pulled me out of the shelter and beat me naked. Basically, *I have become nothing in the eye of the public* because of this constant embarrassment.

Based on my experience and many other women out there who are going through similar problems, the only recommendation I can give is that men should be sensitised on how to treat women. Some men do not bother how their children eat, study or sleep. They take women like property.

The second aspect relates to the ways in which society adapts to the new situation, where women have gained relative power in the household and community, but are only allowed to participate in a horizontal rather than a vertical manner. In this case we regard participation in many community initiatives, groups and church-related matters as horizontal participation. Vertical participation signifies the ability to stand for public office and broadly participate in and influence fora in which local and national political agendas are deliberated.

Views expressed during the validation exercise confirmed rising tensions as a result of women's empowerment. Some men (if not the majority) are reacting to women's increased economic power and visibility in a negative fashion, as highlighted by the quotes below⁴³.

Empowering women is good but the problem is how they perceive power. They look at men as if they are useless.

(INTERVIEW WITH MALE PARTICIPANT, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

Women have been empowered to the disadvantage of men.

(INTERVIEW WITH MALE PARTICIPANT, GULU, NOVEMBER 2009)

Men are frustrating women's efforts. In addition to not participating in household activities, a man can go to play gambling games (e.g. playing cards), comes back to the house, gets what that woman has harvested and sells it to get money for gambling. And nothing is done to such a man.

(INTERVIEW WITH A FEMALE PARTICIPANT IN A GROUP DISCUSSION, LIRA, NOVEMBER 2009)

Men still hold power over women's choices.

(INTERVIEW WITH A MALE PARTICIPANT, LIRA, NOVEMBER 2009)

43 These quotes are selected views on rising social tensions in the post-war era given during the validation exercise in April 2010.

Regarding the coming elections in 2011, it was observed that these tensions could act as a deterrent to women, particularly with regard to offering themselves for public office. For example, participants in the validation workshop in Gulu noted that there could be a possibility that men would “de-campaign” their spouses who were economically more empowered; the level of domestic violence could go up and many potential women might shun participation in the electoral process both as candidates and as voters. These tensions are the reality of a society undergoing rapid change. As noted by participants, the lenses through which women and men view themselves have changed. Men seem to be holding onto the dregs of masculine power. Widespread problems of alcoholism and violence, for example, should not be seen as part of their nature but rather as a result of the fractures in men's perceptions of themselves, where they have to figure out how to relate to the apparent increase in women's economic power. Viewed this way, these problems will require long-term social programmes to normalise gender equality and women's empowerment.

v) Violence in the Wider Political Culture

One of the important aspects underlying low political participation of the population in general, and of women in particular, is the level of violence in political processes, especially elections. Women underlined the inherent fear of contesting, especially for seats in the opposition due to violence which has now become a common occurrence. Violence has tended to become part and parcel of politics. This violent political culture tends to discourage women from participating, as the cost on the individual is very high. Due to this violence, key positions also come to be identified with militancy and, therefore, women are automatically viewed as unable to handle this violence. Even women look at other women as unable to stand violence. Previous studies have also shown that that majority of women have decided to remain silent about their political convictions in order to keep peace. The majority only wait to cast their vote.⁴⁴ Such silence and focus on the ballot box has far-reaching implications for women's political participation. It means that women will not actively engage in elections and agenda setting. This is an issue which requires further research and action, especially in the context of post-war northern Uganda.

44 J. Ahikire and A. Madanda (2009). Op. cit.

6. Concluding Remarks

Undoubtedly, the period of relative peace in northern Uganda has generated a sense of optimism and hope among important actors, including individual women, the government, investors and CSOs engaged in post-war opportunities of reconstruction, rehabilitation and development. Looking at the peace dividends and the direction they are taking, it is clear that women's participation in the post-war economy shows that they are taking advantage of the prevailing economic opportunities, albeit to varying degrees. Women are, in general, increasingly engaged in expanding commercial activities in northern Uganda and other districts, even as far as neighbouring South Sudan across the border.

The post-war period has seen an expansion in the scale of economic activity, as well as women's engagement in the economic opportunities of the peace era. However, transformation of the economy and society at broader levels is still limited. Important pre-war economic activities, such as farming and alcohol brewing, remain eminent in the community, while industrial activity is absent, clearly limiting the degree to which individual women can take advantage of new opportunities.

With regard to the extent to which the country has implemented the 1325 UN Resolution, which requires the active participation of women in order to attain lasting peace in communities affected by armed conflict, there is a mixed picture. On the one hand, women played a less direct role in the Juba peace negotiations; on the other hand, women are playing a prominent role in the post-war economy in various ways.

Potential for social change is apparent in as far as peace and expanding opportunities exist. Women's empowerment at family and community levels has been catapulted not just due to women's engagement in economic activity but also due to the impact of the war, which greatly dislocated male familial power. Women's familial responsibilities have grown and their decision making has been enhanced in- and outside the family. Women have become more visible in the public space than ever before in the history of the region.

However, women's broader political participation beyond mandatory positions, especially in local government, is minimal owing to a number of factors such as limited resources available to women and an overwhelming domestic workload; the lack of a political transformational agenda in groups in which women are involved; negative masculinities characterised by heightened male dominance and violence. These conditions imply that there is a need to take particular steps in order to take advantage of economic opportunities for women's empowerment and political participation.

7. Entry Points for Advocacy and Intervention

Clear revelations from this examination of women's positioning in post-war northern Uganda are that women are critical actors in the reconstruction process. Women are holding up the household economy in fundamental ways. In this regard, there is also an indication that women's increased economic visibility has propelled them to be more eligible for participation in the public sphere in an expanded capacity. However, this possibility is likely to remain only a possibility. Therefore, there is a need for efforts to build on women's economic visibility in order to translate it into political power. A big push is required. Below we outline some of the strategies to put this big push in motion:

i) Ensure Strategic Institutional Development for Women

It is clear that women cannot effectively participate in the peace economy because the majority are only running small business entities. Strategic institutional development is necessary to enable women to take advantage of the available post-war economic opportunities. Women need to be strategically organised to benefit from these opportunities. This requires extensive mobilisation of women, to train them on contracts and awards, and to increase their capacity to form companies and joint ventures. In this way, women will be able to benefit from "hardware" reconstruction programmes and this will increase the range of resources available to them.

ii) Enact By-laws and Ordinances for Affirmative Action for Women (and the Poor) in Local Government Contracts

It is imperative for local governments to provide a wide range of economic opportunities in terms of work, supplies and services. Local governments in post-conflict regions should be mobilised and supported to enact ordinances on affirmative action in the awarding of contracts. This will break the monopoly of men and the rich, and the élite control of economic opportunities in post-war northern Uganda.

iii) Harmonise Interventions, Limit Excessive Collectivisation

Excessive collectivisation is doing more harm than good. There is need to harmonise interventions so that each and every programme targeting women does not require the formation of new groups, which often comes with burdens, e.g. opening new bank accounts and writing project proposals. This will require emphasis on organisation as opposed to always forming groups for each issue which arises. Support and training should, as much as possible, target existing groups and, even then, have aspects which can enhance individual growth and participation in broader matters which affect the community, the district and the country at large.

iv) Strengthen and Utilise Community Development Functions

Harmonising interventions could also be in terms of empowering and utilising the Community Development Services (CBS) Department at district and sub-county levels. The financial capacity of the department has a major bearing on empowerment interventions for women. The CBS department should be used as a node to harmonise some of these interventions. A study on best practices identified in some districts is essential in this regard.

v) "Politicise" Women's Groups

As seen from the analysis, women's "grouping" currently is excessively focused on economic and welfare issues. Politicisation of groups can involve several strategies. One is to promote women's activity in political parties; for example, with major political events such as the upcoming 2011 national elections, these groups should be able to employ activities which bring them together to strategise which women could stand for which posts and in which parties, and ways to support them financially or otherwise. In this way women could be able to demand accountability from

their parties. Other ways can involve training women on how to participate effectively at various levels and, additionally, how to form political alliances and coalitions across parties. In this way women's groups will be utilised as platforms to advocate for political advancement programmes.

vi) Mobilise Men to Reconstruct Positive Masculinities

Conflict has one key impact on men, which is to crush positive and generative masculinities, leaving the majority holding onto destructive masculinities. As quoted in UNIFEM's Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 on VAW, 'real and lasting change to end violence against women and girls needs to be grounded at the community level, where acts of abuse and where women should be able to demand their rights to justice, protection and support. Involving men and boys in actions to prevent and respond to violence against women is critical in finding a meaningful solution.'⁴⁵

This citation focuses on gender-based violence, but can be true for any other desired change in gender relations. In the case of northern Uganda, there is, in addition to ending gender-based violence, an urgent need to bring men back into household provisioning as an obligation rather than a choice. A focus on men in this case is beneficial for both women and men. On the part of women it will definitely reduce the heavy burden (physical and emotional) which the majority of them currently shoulder. With regard to men, mobilisation and support should be part of the healing process to enable them to recreate positive masculinities and usefully participate in the reconstruction of society. The mobilisation of men should have clear messages on how men stand to gain from a cooperative, productive and violence-free society/household.

vii) Mobilise Women to Vote for Women

Data shows that almost all women vote. Data also shows that the willingness to vote for women is slowly increasing amongst women and even men. There is a need for a very focused and concrete mobilisation for women to select and support fellow women.

viii) Eradicate Gender-based Violence, Address Violence in Politics

Violence deeply fractures the fabric of society and discourages the development of a civic culture, i.e. a culture or environment in which people abide by the law. Violence tends to impact more on women by discouraging them and, furthermore, framing them as those unable to cope with violence.

On GBV there are many actors, e.g. CARE International, the Ministry Of Gender Labour and Social Development, and UNFPA. There is a need to find ways to scale up these activities and, in addition, enhance community vigilance against VAW. There is a need to popularise the recently-enacted Domestic Violence Act of 2010, as well as monitor its implementation in a very interactive and focused manner.

At the wider level, there is a need to advocate for a violence-free political environment. In this regard there needs to be mechanisms in place to deal with perpetrators, both nationally and internationally. An international dimension is particularly essential, in that, nationally, key perpetrators of violence seem to be above the law. There is therefore a need to utilise international mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). The impact of filing cases with the ICC should never be underestimated, even if they do not have immediate outcomes. The act and process of filing such cases have the potential to effect long-term change in political culture.

⁴⁵ UNIFEM (2009). 'Who Answers to Women: Gender and Accountability', *Progress of the World's Women report 2008/2009*. New York, p.11.

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